



The Legionaries

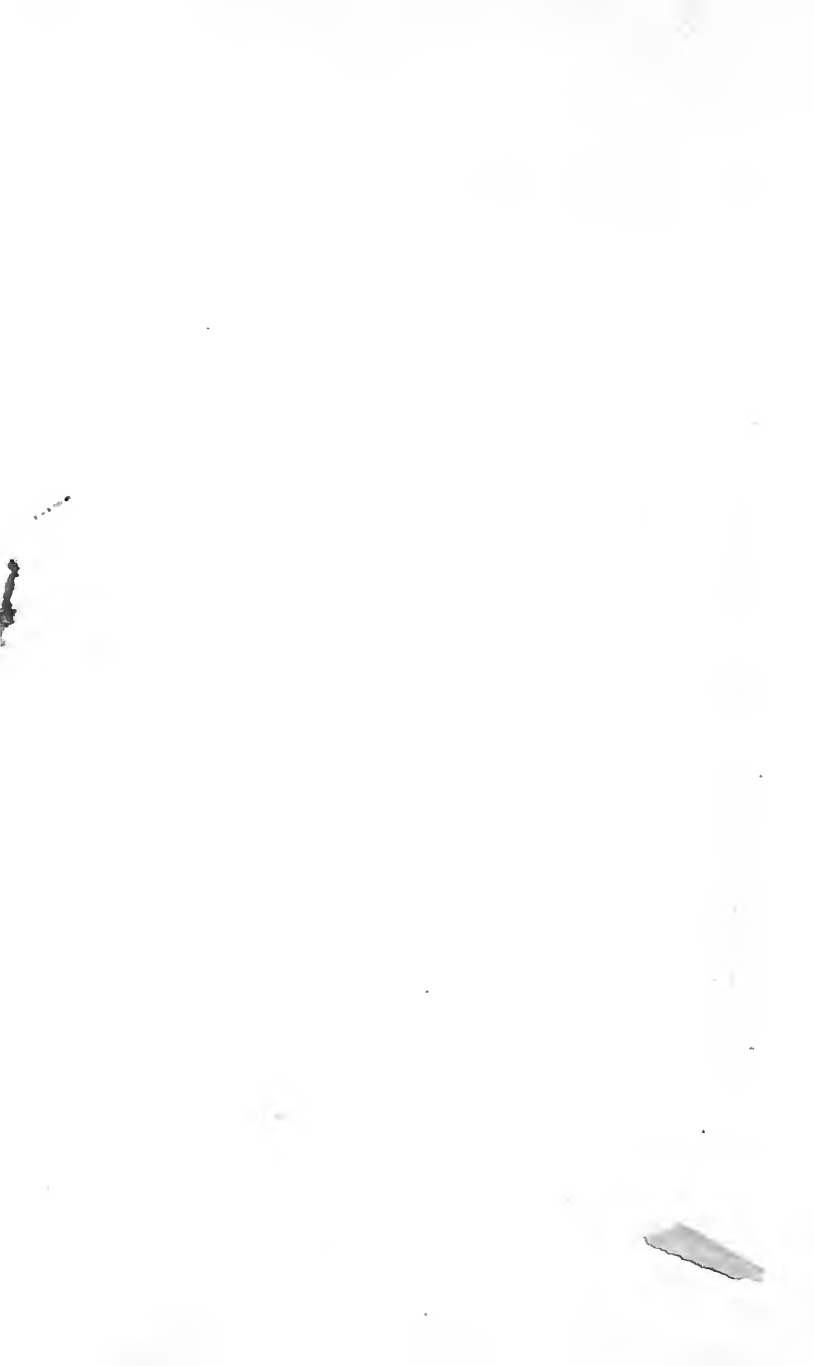
HENRY SCOTT CLARK





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LOS ANGELES

The Legionaries





. . EVERY WORD THEY SPOKE, THOUGH THEIR VOICES WERE AT
FIRST LOW, CAME TO MY EARS DISTINCTLY. *page 184.*

The Legionaries

BY

HENRY SCOTT CLARK

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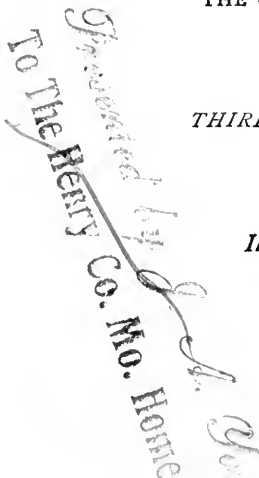
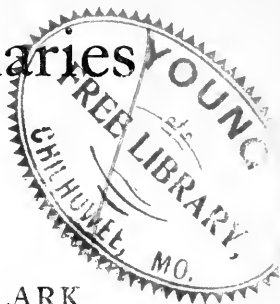
A STORY OF
THE GREAT RAID

THIRD EDITION.

Illustrated

INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA
THE BOWEN-MERRILL COMPANY
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"* * * sons of the selfsame race
And blood of the selfsame clan,
Let us speak with each other, face to face,
And answer as man to man,
And loyally love and trust each other as none but
free men can."

(ix)

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The Legionaries



The Legionaries

CHAPTER I

WHAT OF VIRGINIA

AT middle life my father found himself a poor man—a poor country gentleman. It is not such a great misfortune to be a poor city gentleman, for the latter is only one of many of all sorts and conditions. He may easily lose himself in the multitude, or, if he dislike obscurity, he may conceal from the public gaze the slenderness of his purse and affect an appearance not justified by his fortune. But in the country one's goings in and comings out, if in any sense or degree out of the common way, are likely to attract attention and provoke comment of the kind one least desires.

In the Virginia county in which my father was born and had spent nearly all his life, he was surrounded by old and well-to-do families with whom and their ancestors he and his ancestors had

mingled for many generations. They knew the extent of his estate to the acre, and could compute his income with more than tolerable accuracy. If he was compelled to part with a portion of the one or suffered a diminution of the other they were certain to know it, and likewise the particular nature of the adversity that moved to the sacrifice.

So, at least, my father found it when a mistaken confidence in others led to his financial undoing. Usually such a blow as the loss of fortune is more stunning when it is received than at any time afterward, but in his case it was not that way. Not until he began to feel how surely the loss of money carried with it deprivation, in some measure, of other things that he valued more highly than money did he fully understand the extent of the disaster that had overtaken him. Being a proud man and perhaps supersensitive, he was cut to the heart when the realization came that he could no longer hold up his head with the highest. True, he had not lost all. A remnant of his once very considerable estate was left, but it was not sufficient to maintain his establishment on terms of equality with the best. Our family continued to be held in regard, for it was—let me say it—eminently respectable, but in my father's view our very respectability only served to aggravate the evils of our condition.

If we had been content to live as many do, and to drift along from day to day, not caring for the

morrow, overlooking slights and forgetting past things, it would have been easier for us. Probably I should not say *us*, for I was not much at home during those last melancholy days in Virginia, being in the military school at West Point, where the government was doing what it could to fit me for a soldier. I did not know all that was going on nor all that my father felt, but his letters to me betrayed a very uncheerful spirit. His dissatisfaction, indeed, constantly augmented, and he became possessed of a fancy that there was a lack of the old courteous attention from those about him. Finally a letter came telling me that he had accepted an appointment to office in Washington—this was in the early days of President Buchanan's administration—and that he and my mother would presently proceed to the Capital, which they very soon did.

The appointment was accepted as an honorable means of getting away from the old scenes, upon which such a different face had been put by his changed condition, and, while fairly lucrative, proved irksome. It was not long until he was ready to relinquish it. Could he have resumed his old place he would gladly have returned to Virginia. As that could not be, he was looking around, he wrote me. For one situated as he was the South then afforded few opportunities for financial recuperation, even if there were

ambition to try; this ambition he had not, having lost his spirit and being none too strong.

The storm which a few years later broke with such fury was brewing. Its mutterings could be heard by any man who would open his ears and listen. It was despite this fact and not because of it that he took a very unexpected step, in which no doubt he was encouraged by my mother who, in addition to her most lovable qualities, was possessed of a strong will and great self-reliance. This was no less than a removal, with all his belongings, to Indiana. However influential my mother may have been in inducing this, at the time, extraordinary change of residence, she was not wholly responsible for it. Roger Bellray had much to do with it, but I have since come to believe that my mother, with her woman's intuition, along with unusual foresight, had prescience of the terrible events that were to happen in Virginia and desired to get far away from the soil that was so soon to be drenched with blood.

A bachelor, a man of affairs, a gentleman farmer and still young—such and more was Roger Bellray. Having means and leisure, as well as natural inclination, he had given a good deal of attention to politics—not, however, as an office-seeker or office-holder, for he valued too highly the freedom and independence of private citizenship to exchange them for the cares of

place. He had spent some winters in Washington as a looker-on, interested in the workings of the complicated government machinery. He met and greatly impressed my discouraged father by his vigorous and magnetic personality. Their acquaintance ripened into a sudden and lasting friendship.

To him my father confided his determination to retire to some quiet country place where he could busy himself with small affairs without disturbance. As it happened, the estate adjoining Bellray's was then on the market at a price well within the means still at my father's command. In the spring he went West, and finding the place satisfactory, or at least as nearly satisfactory as any could be that did not equal that which he had been forced to relinquish, he bought it. I was advised of this contemplated purchase, but while it seemed to me a poor business, there was no occasion for me to set up my opinion in opposition to it.

The few years, as it befell, that yet remained to him were passed in peace, if not in contentment. More by the thrifty management of my mother, acting under the advice of Bellray, than by any business skill of his own, his new possessions yielded returns sufficient to maintain a respectable establishment without trenching upon the fund which had been set aside to send

me abroad after my graduation, as every male Trenham had been sent for a hundred years.

Having a taste for martial things, I was, through the influence of the American minister, which we were yet able to invoke, admitted as a student in a French military institute, and for two years devoted myself assiduously to the task of receiving instruction. I was rather a serious-minded young man and eschewed most of the follies to which many of those about me were addicted. While in the main my stay in the institute was not unpleasant, I was, as a foreigner, who was there merely by the grace of the French government, subjected to many annoyances.

At first I was tolerated as a semi-barbarian and curiosity, but when it was found that I was disposed to insist upon respectful treatment, although I did so as mildly as the circumstances would allow, I met with some difficulty at the hands of a few of the most violently inclined young Frenchmen. The result was that I was forced into an encounter with a smart yet reckless fellow who was put forward as the champion of those who had determined to make me win my spurs.

Swordsmanship was taught there, as in all high class institutions of the kind, and many of the students had acquired a degree of expertness that would have been creditable even in those long-gone times when skill at fencing was the first

requirement of a gentleman. Fortunately for me—not only then but later—I knew something of the art. I had set out early to acquire some knowledge of the uses of the weapon and became greatly interested in the pursuit. The fencing master asserted that I had a quickness of eye and a steadiness of nerve without which the sword was as useless as a walking stick. Thus encouraged, and finding that the exercise was invigorating and healthful, I continued it with great spirit, not unmixed with a little pride.

So when I was given to understand by my friends in the institute that my peace, and my standing in the eyes of my fellows, demanded that I should not ignore the challenge of the fiery Venault, I accepted it. Although not really a bad fellow at heart, Venault had a good many traits of the bully and had terrorized half the school into submission to his domination. Not a few of them desired to see him humiliated; and while they did not believe in my ability to accomplish his overthrow, they were willing enough that I should try.

Their ideas of America were dim and uncertain. In the minds of most of them it was merely a far-away land which their own country had been principally instrumental in wresting from the hated English, a land where men acquired wealth by some species of magic and returned to civilized countries to enjoy it. I did

what I could to give them a more favorable understanding, but I fear that I really accomplished little before my trouble with Paul Venault, and not greatly more afterward.

The morning came for our meeting. Dueling was, of course, prohibited, but under the guise of a fencing bout, in which, if a wound was received, it was proclaimed to be an accident, it was nevertheless carried on in very genuine fashion. My opponent appeared on the ground fresh and confident, his young mustachios daintily waxed and twisted, and his handsome eyes lively with the excitement of the occasion. A fine specimen of the dashing, volatile Latin was Paul Venault. In size and strength we were a fair match. He was nearly, if not quite, six feet in height, sinewy, active and alert. What a swordsman he would have made had it not been for his hot head and his proneness always to hold an opponent too cheaply!

We stripped for the encounter and took our positions. Venault smiled at first somewhat disdainfully, but at the onset he replaced the smile with a fierce look which was meant to overawe me, as I have no doubt it had overawed others. Fortunately for me, I very well realized that it was not fierce looks that won battles of this sort, but good, steady sword-play. Much to the surprise of all and to the deep humiliation of my opponent, the contest went in my favor more easily than I

had believed it would, and Venault was retired with a wound in his arm.

He had the manliness to congratulate me on my victory, but the heartiness of the acknowledgment was marred by his professed belief that the thrust which had disabled him was directed by chance. If this afforded him consolation I was not the one to deprive him of it, though I knew the contrary to be the fact. After this I got along fairly well and received from none more considerate treatment than from Venault.

I have written of this experience in no spirit of vaunting, but because Paul came once again into my life on a very different field, and also because it is the easiest way to explain how I was able to bear myself with credit in a more serious encounter under most unusual circumstances.

Only meager information came to me as to what was happening at home. My father had written of the great contest for the presidency then going on with a heat and virulence of faction never before known, and gave it as his opinion that Lincoln's success meant the attempted secession from the Union of the southern states and then war between the sections. My ideas as to the causes of the trouble were, I fancy, at that time hazy and inaccurate. For two years I had been abroad, giving more heed to present concerns than to thoughts of future strife between my countrymen.

In a general way I knew that there had been

bitter sectional contention at home in which the question of slavery was in some way involved—for there had been trouble at West Point between the northern and southern lads—but I had not dreamed that the conditions were so acute as my father's letters indicated. As a southerner born my sympathies were with the South, so quick are we to believe that our own people must be right and everybody else wrong. I eagerly awaited further intelligence, which had to come by the slow process of the mails carried by the not too rapid steamers which then traversed the Atlantic.

Late in December a letter reached me, written by my mother, conveying the serious tidings that my father's health, which long had been delicate, had taken a sudden turn for the worse and she had grave fears for his life. She urged me to return home immediately, and enclosed money for my journey. A line added at the bottom of the last page, as if an afterthought, told me that Lincoln had been elected to the presidency. Only the bare fact was stated, without comment, and thus I had no confirmation or otherwise of my father's misgivings; but she took little interest in politics at best, and was thinking then, no doubt, only of her husband's state.

Settling my few affairs as fast as possible, I set out for Paris to get my passports. From the papers there, which usually devoted but little attention to the affairs of America, I learned that a

crisis was thought to be approaching in the United States which threatened the integrity of the republic. This, if well founded, would be good news to Louis Napoleon, to whom republics, since the time of his own treachery to France, were a constantly menacing nightmare. A January voyage across the Atlantic was not what I would have chosen, but there was no alternative. The tone of my mother's letter convinced me that there should be no avoidable delay. It was a terrible journey through gales, driving rains, sleet and snow, but it was accomplished at last.

On arriving in New York, I found, during my few hours of necessary detention, that everybody was in a state of feverish excitement. All around could be heard the shouts of the newspaper vendors, crying that another state had seceded from the Union. This, I soon learned, was Georgia, the fifth to take that momentous and, as it proved, almost fatal step. There were plenty about to enlighten me as to what had been done, as well as to what was being done. Without doubt the country was on the verge of war. National property in all the seceding states had been seized, including arsenals and forts and the navy-yard at Pensacola. The authorities at Washington were bitterly assailed for not putting forth a strong hand and suppressing the insurrection in its incipency, and were wildly accused of being in league with treason.

"What of Virginia?" I asked later of a bystander at the railway station.

"Virginia is still true, but she is expected to go the way of the others," he answered, gloomily. "You are of the North, I suppose?"

"I am a Virginian," said I, proudly, and added, "but just returned from France."

He looked about him apprehensively, and then, coming a little nearer, so as not to be overheard, he said: "You are safer than I, yet, for I am a South Carolinian, and my state has led the procession out of the Union," saying which he walked quickly away from me and was lost to my view in the crowd.

Safer! So it had already become a question of personal danger. I had told him that I was a Virginian, which was the truth, yet my home was in Indiana. The anomalous position in which I was placed had barely occurred to me before, but it struck me now with full force. Beyond any question at all Indiana would stand by the Union. My father had expatriated himself from Virginia, but had I? Except the short period of three months that I had spent with my parents just prior to going abroad I had never been in the state to which they had removed. I was worried and perplexed. If war came I ought to bear a part. Otherwise, why had I been educated in soldier craft?

Two days of continuous travel were required to

make the trip from New York to the old capital town of Corydon, a few miles outside of which, to the northward, lay my father's new possessions. My route took me through a country intensely hostile to the South. The critical condition of the republic was almost the sole topic of conversation among my constantly changing fellow-passengers. A few argued in favor of letting the southern states go, declaring that it would be a good riddance, but by far the greater number held that the Union should be preserved at all hazards. Into these arguments I did not obtrude, and I noticed that there were others who, like myself, did not deem it expedient to put forward their opinions, and, who, when now and then appealed to, remained steadily non-committal.

It must not be understood that these things, absorbing as they were, engrossed all of my thoughts. I was deeply concerned about my father, always kind and generous, who had poured out upon me, as the only child, a full measure of affection. I had been absent a long time, and how should I find him? And my loving mother, who had laid everything at my feet since that day, now twenty-two years gone, when I first came helpless into her arms, how was she?

There came into my mind, too, a vision of another—a spirited little maid of glorious promise—Kate, Roger Bellray's young sister. She must be nearly eighteen by now, and if the flower

was as beautiful as the bud—ah! I was young; how should I find Kate Bellray?

Finally I reached the end of my travel by rail at Jeffersonville, from which point I took stage for Corydon, something more than twenty miles away, arriving there late in the afternoon of a day of clear sky and sharp north wind. Hastily partaking of a little refreshment, I entered the conveyance that I had ordered to carry me over the few miles yet separating me from my father's house, leaving my baggage to follow on the morrow. Darkness had set in by the time we drew rein in front of the wide porch of southern fashion, from which my mother waved her hand in farewell on that September day when I started on the journey from which I was now returning. How should I find them? The rooms were alight down stairs. Jumping out I discharged the driver, hastened toward the house, up the steps and gave the old-fashioned bell a pull that could have been heard from garret to cellar. The door was opened presently by the well-remembered black servant Martha, a slave in Virginia, but here free, yet who clung to my family closer than if she were still bond.

"Marse John!" she exclaimed, throwing up her hands as if I were an apparition.

And then the good soul began to cry and buried her face in her gingham apron. I understood very well from this that my father was dead.

CHAPTER II

THE MONSTER WAR

MY father's death, of which I was not wholly unprepared to hear, had occurred two weeks before my arrival. It was a great shock to me and an overwhelming grief to my mother, but my presence went far to comfort her. She now leaned upon me in all things, and sought advice which I was poorly prepared to give. But I went to work diligently to acquire a knowledge of our affairs and found them to be in good condition; and yet how our present position contrasted with that from which we had been deposed!—a bare three hundred acres as against as many thousands, a modest, but roomy and comfortable house as against the imposing mansion within the walls of which generations of Trenhams had been born, and where they had laughed, and wept, and lived, and died. Where happy slaves in that still recent time gave willing service, now four or five paid servants did all the work of house and farm. Father had never become reconciled to the change, but mother, possessing a more elastic temperament and a cheer-

fulness of disposition not easily shaken, accepted it without a murmur. Only on his account and mine was she ever known to express a regret, and this, being buoyant and hopeful, I labored to dispel so far as it concerned myself.

We were a little removed from direct communication with the world, but by means of the Louisville newspapers were kept tolerably informed as to what was going on. The new president was inaugurated in March. His address on that occasion, while intended to be pacific, was unsatisfactory to the South and was looked upon by the leading secessionists as menacing. Representatives of the seceding states met and agreed upon a plan of confederation. Both sides began to arm, and those conservative people in both sections—there were many of them—who had hoped for peace, lost heart. And well they might, as things went from bad to worse with each passing day. At last, about the middle of April, came that direful news from Charleston harbor, that open defiance of the national government which constituted an act of war. It was so accepted everywhere, and preparations for that miserable, unhappy family conflict, so long dreaded, and now, thank God, so long past and forgiven, were redoubled.

I had but slight acquaintance in our locality, and aside from occasional trips to Corydon, now and then extended to Louisville, I stayed mostly at

home, doing what I could to mitigate my mother's sorrow, and to aid in the management of her affairs. Roger Bellray, who had gone to Washington, as was his custom, and on to New England, as he told me, to visit his sister who was there in school, came home a few weeks after the inauguration. Until then I had not seen him since my return. He was gloomy and cast down, and told me then that all efforts toward compromising the issue between the sections had come to naught. He blamed the hot-heads north and south for the threatened disruption of the Union, which he deplored as a calamity, but which, he insisted, there was no constitutional power to prevent. The secession of the southern states he held to be a great political blunder, but to restrain them by force of arms would be a crime. In his view each of the states of the Union was sovereign, and was as free to withdraw its consent to a continuation of the compact into which it had entered as it had been in the first instance to give it.

"We are going to the devil," he said finally, "and when the crash comes, as it will come, every man must look out for himself."

The constitutional phases of the question did not interest me, and so I did not allow myself to be troubled by them. What I saw was that that portion of the country with which my family so long had been identified was arraying itself against

that other portion which my father, mild man as he was, always asserted had been guilty of unjust encroachments. Virginia did not join the Confederacy at once, but did so in May, and not long afterward the people of the South looked over the border toward the people of the North, and the faces of both were as flint. Presently they clashed and struck fire. Gods! beneath the flint there was blood and it ran red and fast.

My graduation from the academy at West Point entitled me to a lieutenant's commission, but this I had resigned in order to continue my studies abroad, and was thus free to take such course as I saw fit. Many officers of southern birth had already sent in their resignations from the army and hurried back to their states to accept commands in the forces of the new Confederacy. No doubt I should have followed their example had not my previous action made such a step unnecessary; but I was glad then, and am now, that I was not put to such a choice.

What should I do? I had grown up with my full share of prejudices against the North, which my four years at West Point had not removed. The northern and southern youths were, as I have said, at arm's length during the last half of my stay at the academy, and quarrels led in several instances to personal collisions, in which each contestant was given satisfactory proof of the metal of his opponent. In all affairs of this

kind that came under my observation, I enacted the ungrateful and always difficult role of peace-maker whenever possible. In one unfortunate instance I not only had my trouble for my pains, but later was compelled to defend myself against a classmate from Georgia, who imagined that I had offended him. But for the most part I sided with my fellow-southerners in the imperfect arguments by which the cadets sought with feeble success to convince each other of error.

My stay abroad had done much to nationalize my feelings, and heaven knows that had it not been for that ill-starred and deplorable division, the iniquity of which I did not see until long afterward, I should have returned to America with an intensified love of my native land. But in my youthful eyes then Virginia was my native land more surely than the wide republic of united commonwealths, and the new home of my parents was scarcely better than alien territory. Indeed, as I viewed it, it was alien in truth from the moment Virginia adopted the ordinance of separation, and cast her fortunes with the other seceding states. Try as I would, and did, for my mother's sake, to think otherwise, I could not rise above the feeling that I was merely a sojourner in Indiana, with no tie to bind me there save that of filial duty to a loved one so newly and sorely bereft.

As the war progressed, I became more and

more restless, and with the unreckoning ardor of youth longed to throw myself into the conflict. To remove one obstacle I tried to persuade my mother to dispose of the farm and go to Richmond—the chosen capital of the new Confederacy—where she had relatives, but she steadfastly answered that she would stay where she was, near the grave of my father, and that when her time came, in God's providence, she would be buried there by his side. No words could meet that simple argument, and I attempted none nor did I yet have the heart to leave her in her loneliness. She clung to me now as all that remained to her, and felt—though she did not say it in words—that I should not ask her to make so great a sacrifice.

To her, war was merely a many-headed monster, with tremendous capabilities for death and heart-break. Was there ever a woman, unless, indeed, she were carried beyond herself by some overwhelming zeal or frenzy, who, without hesitation, gave up a son to battle? If there were ever such it was not my mother. She begged and implored me to wait—wait. I know that she hoped and tried to make herself believe that the war would be brought to a speedy end, as millions of others did; but it grew and spread and became increasingly more bitter and implacable. It was soon evident that it was to be a struggle to the very death, and that the end would only come when

the resources of one or the other of the contestants were exhausted.

One evening, late in July, I rode over to Bell-ray's house, scarcely more than a mile away, which gleamed large and white in a grove of maple and elm trees. As I approached I heard a girl's voice singing a new northern song. Looking about me I saw the singer, simply dressed in some white material, coming along the orchard path toward the house. Her face was partly concealed by a wide-brimmed "sundown" of straw, held in place by pale blue ribbons tied beneath her chin. Seeing me, the song was suddenly suspended, but the girl came on. I secured my horse at the gate and went up the walk. A turn in the path had thrown the house between us for a moment and I stopped and waited for her to reappear, for this must be Kate Bellray whose home-coming had been expected for some days. Presently she turned the corner of the building. It was she, only the promising child had come to be a woman. I essayed to speak.

"Miss Bellray, I believe?" was the best I could do. And how weak it sounded, as if there were the least question in my mind as to who she was!

"Have I changed so much that you are in doubt?" she asked, smiling. "Or had you forgotten me?"

"You have changed, certainly, and just as cer-

tainly I had not forgotten you. A victim rarely forgets the one who put him on the rack."

"Is it because of that that you remember me?" she said, the old mischievous sparkle in her eyes. "I must have been worse than I thought."

"The memory has been a pleasant one," I returned, "so pleasant that time and distance have not effaced it."

And so we began very much as we had left off three years before, but she soon became serious enough, as, seated in the shade of the wide porch, we talked of many things. Fresh-faced and clear-eyed, with the curving beauty of girlhood just rounding into womanliness, she made the most attractive picture I had ever seen. In figure she was neither short nor tall, and as graceful in every movement as the willow when bending to the kiss of the south wind. Her mouth showed a line of firmness without obstinacy that gave a key to her character. Never have I seen eyes like hers, at once so full of intelligence and so expressive of her emotions. Whether in mirth, anger or sadness—and I have seen her in each state—the beholder must perforce yield to their spell, for her very soul seemed to look out upon him. I am not skilled in the art of describing physical perfections, but did I possess it in superlative degree I could lavish it all, without degrading it, upon Kate Bellray as she then was. She had temper, and was given to moods—what

man or woman is not?—and I have felt them all, and sometimes writhed under them, but I nevertheless aver—but why should I aver anything? So partial a witness might be doubted.

Roger, who had gone to Corydon, came back while I was still there, bringing word of the first battle at Manassas, in which the Union forces were not only defeated, but had fled in panic back upon Washington, which city was believed to be in danger of capture. I had a feeling of exultation over the fact that the invading army had been driven from Virginia, which must unconsciously have shown in my face.

“This news pleases you, sir,” said Miss Bell-ray disconcertingly.

Somewhat taken aback, I hardly knew what answer to make, so direct and unexpected was the attack. “One naturally sides with his kith and kin,” I returned haltingly, with a feeling that my face had grown suddenly red.

“One should not do so unless sure that they are right, and it can never be right to make war upon one’s country,” she exclaimed, with fine emphasis.

“It depends on the point of view,” said I.

“Don’t argue with her, John,” said Roger, laughing. “She is as contentious as ever; in fact, a regular firebrand, and wholly incorrigible.”

“Mr. Trenham was educated for a soldier, and he certainly will not run away from a girl’s argu-

ments," she retorted, but in such plain good humor that it carried no sting.

"He would rather face a battery no doubt; at least I should. A girl's argument is like her hair—she arranges it to suit herself, and not always in proper fashion," her brother returned, helping me out of what seemed to him an awkward situation, but which, indeed, I did not find unpleasant, as I watched the girl's animated face.

"But, Sir Roger de Coverley, you forget that I have studied logic as well as hair dressing."

"Come, Kate, drop the de Coverley, as I did long ago; and also drop logic. Don't you know that it has been said over and over again that there is nothing quite so unwomanly as logic?"

"Is it so?" she cried, tossing her head in mock seriousness. "Then allow me to ask a question; that, at least, is one thing that women will not be denied: Was the loss very great in this miserable battle?"

"The number of killed and wounded on both sides is large, and, as for the missing—well, the whole Union army is missing," Roger answered soberly.

"Terrible!" she exclaimed. Then looking at her brother keenly she added: "You seem disposed to make light of the misfortune of your country."

The thrust was sharp, but he was prepared to parry it. "Perhaps it is not a misfortune,

Unlan. Mo. Coal Company by J. A. Young, 1914.

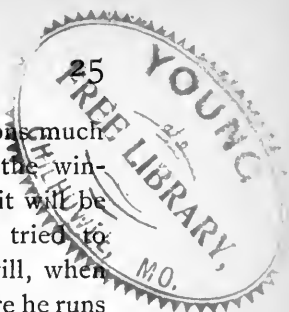
The Monster War

my sister. This disaster may teach lessons much more valuable than would have been the winning of the victory. And, at any rate, it will be safe to wager that every raw lad who tried to out-foot his comrades to Washington will, when put to another test, die in his tracks before he runs again. That is human nature, and he will never be on good terms with himself until he has been given another trial at his enemy."

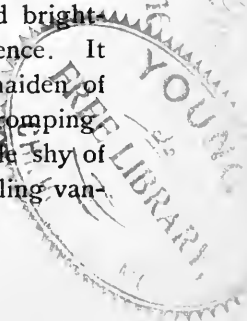
She looked at him gratefully, her ruffled feelings being smoothed by his diplomacy. The conversation was soon turned into a less dangerous channel.

Kate was an ardent patriot. She had been for more than three years at school in a city that had been a hotbed of Abolition sentiment. The south had there been pilloried in the public eye for a generation and more, and she had been deeply impressed with what she believed to be the sinful transgressions of the southern people. There was nothing personal or individual in her antipathy, for she had thought well of my father, and looked upon my mother with open affection. During her vacations, which she spent at home, she had been much at our house, I was told, and brightened it with her young and cheerful presence. It was there that I first met her, a rosy maiden of fifteen joyous years, somewhat given to romping.

At the beginning she had been a little shy of me, but on a better acquaintance this feeling van-



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ished and she indulged in the delightful pastime of vexing me in every way that a quick wit could suggest. I had sense enough to see the utter lack of malice in her behavior, and soon came to have a thorough enjoyment of her most elaborate schemes of torture. She had come into my mind very often in the three years that had elapsed since, not seriously, however, but as an interesting recollection. For, be it understood, I then held myself to be a man and she a mere slip of a girl, destined, no doubt, to grow into a lovely woman. In a physical way, certainly, this destiny was fulfilled in even larger degree than I had imagined, and as to her other attributes there never had been room for the least question. The old inclination to place thorns in my pathway, knowing that I would stumble upon them and furnish her amusement in extricating myself, was held in check, but not entirely subdued. Now and then it was given liberty during the next year, in which we were much together.

Her intense Unionism—which I was not inclined to regard as serious in a woman—and my anomalous and wholly unsatisfactory position gave her opportunities of which, in the main, I will say to her credit, she availed herself sparingly. Being naturally kind of heart, she very soon learned that here was the vulnerable point through which my feelings could be most sorely harassed. But even toward this tender spot she would at

times, when I had been so unfortunate as to irritate her by some reference to the South, direct her sharpest javelins, and I, helpless to pluck them out, would smother the pain they caused me as best I could.

Sometimes for days I would avoid her, so keenly did I feel the humiliation of my position of inaction in the great struggle now going on almost at our doors, about which she frequently rallied me. But as the needle responds to the magnet without reasoning why, so would I turn again toward this fair star of the north who attracted me so powerfully. I think she clearly understood on these occasions that in keeping away from her I was not moved by childish pique. Had she thought otherwise she could not, with her qualities, have treated me with the respect, and a something bordering on contrition, that she took no pains to conceal when we would again come together. For this I was grateful, and for a time we would get along smoothly enough, laughing off the old trouble and vowing to avoid further offense.

What made my lot the harder to endure was the knowledge that very many of the best young men in the county had gone to the war. By far the greater number, of course, went into the national army, but it was more than suspected that some, for one reason or another, had slipped quietly across the Ohio river to join the Confed-

erate forces. Roger Bellray himself told me of instances of this kind, and no man was better informed than he as to what was going on in our locality. The loss to the North in this manner was, it was clearly apparent, fully made up by the accessions to its strength which came from the South. Nothing can more effectively illustrate the lack of unanimity of sentiment in both sections, unless it be those numerous and fully accredited instances of persecution and door-to-door warfare for opinion's sake, which raged then and later in many states on both sides of the Ohio.

Among those who had joined the national army was young Philip Deverny, a member of an influential family living not far beyond the Bellray place. He had recently been at home suffering from a disabling wound received in the battle at Shiloh, and wore the uniform of a lieutenant of cavalry. I saw him last at Bellray's one evening just before he departed to rejoin his regiment, then at Corinth. Self-contained and handsome, with the prestige of a soldier who had been in battle, I felt that in his presence I was overshadowed. And yet nothing could have been more considerate and circumspect than his conduct; it was exemplary, and in all respects above reproach. We talked about our differing views, but we did it as gentlemen, and at parting he expressed the hope that one day we might

meet in the field, though not in personal strife; a hope that I gladly seconded, but which nearly failed of realization.

For some time afterward Kate treated me with a reserve and curtness of manner which, while largely unconscious and not intended to offend, wounded me deeply. I could not but attribute it to the contrast that she must have drawn in her mind, to my very great disadvantage, between myself and the lieutenant. I had no cause to be jealous of him—even if I were disposed to entertain so base a feeling—for Kate herself had told me that he had long paid court to Betty West, her one intimate girl friend. So far as that matter is concerned, nothing had passed between Kate and me that gave me a claim upon her to the exclusion of any one else, and I made no pretense of asserting any.

But she must know why I, educated for a military career, apparently dawdled at home while others hastened to the front where courageous men fought and died for what they believed to be the right. If she did not know I could not tell her. I could not put forward my lonely mother and her appeals to me to tarry yet awhile, to shield me from the criticism that my non-action seemed to merit.

CHAPTER III

THE PLACARD ON THE POST

ONE day a small party of us were returning from a visit to the great Wyandotte cavern. While living only a few miles away, I had never before seen its many wonders, and for my benefit Roger Bellray and his sister had arranged the expedition. Bellray, with my mother and Mrs. Willing, an elderly aunt, who for years had looked after his household, went in a carriage, but Kate and I had preferred to go on horseback.

It was while returning homeward from this excursion that I suffered the sharpest vexation of spirit at her hands, followed by the swiftest amends. We rode in advance of the others, and being able to make better speed, even without haste, we soon left them out of sight. She had behaved well throughout the day, but now an unlucky reference of mine to some caverns of the South opened up the old difficulty.

"They are, of course, vastly superior to the Wyandotte," she said, with a sudden change of manner.

"I had not said so," I returned, propitiatingly.

"I never saw them, but am told that they are quite fine."

"Certainly they are; they must be," she exclaimed, tossing her head scornfully. "As the South surpasses us in everything else, it naturally excels in caves."

Putting whip to her horse, she galloped furiously ahead, as if determined to get as far as possible away from my unfortunate South, and from myself, its no less luckless son. How she tried my patience! But I was resolved to keep my temper. She presently slowed her pace, and allowed me to come up with her. I waited for her to speak, but she remained silent.

She did not look at me at once, but leaning forward she stroked with one small gloved hand the arched neck of her thoroughbred Kentuckian. Her back was to the low-lying September sun, which tangled its rays of fire with the golden brown tints of her hair. I could not see her face, but the cheek toward me was aflame. After a little time she turned her head, and I saw that the threatened storm had not completely passed over.

"It seems to me a little strange, Mr. Trenham, that you should remain in such a commonplace country as this after having experienced the delights of your southern paradise," she said steadily.

This was too much. "God knows that I have

been ready to leave it for many long months, not because it is commonplace, but because it is not mine," I broke out with some bitterness, forgetting, in the face of this new provocation, my good resolution.

"What restrains you?" she asked, with harrowing coolness. "Other men have gone who would have liked to stay."

"You know very well what has kept me," said I, in a voice that sounded hard and unnatural to my own ears. "I wonder that you can ask such a question."

She looked a little alarmed, and some of the color left her face. I was exasperated and hurt, and restrained my anger with difficulty. I fancy that she saw the wound she had inflicted, and that it was deep. She changed about completely.

"I have again offended you," she said, with an air of contrition, "and, while I have many previous transgressions against your good nature to reproach myself for, I must now admit renewed guilt, and ask your pardon."

"To be offended I must feel," I returned, my inward wrath not wholly appeased; "and to feel I must be made of blood and bone, tissue and nerves like other men. Does it just now occur to you, Kate, that I am not wood or iron, or baker's dough?"

"Don't be foolish, John," she said, looking straight down the road. It was the first time

she had called me by this name since she had come home, and I was at once disarmed. She turned her face to mine and continued: "I have no disposition, really and truly, as you ought to know, to hurt you in any way, and I am sorry for having done so. Indeed, I must confess my surprise that you have all along taken my poor opinions so seriously. Nobody else does, except Betty West. When I talk at home about the war and such things Aunt Sarah is inclined to go to sleep and Roger busies himself with something, smiles and says 'yes' and 'no' without any relevancy whatever. No doubt I have imposed on you, and you have borne it all like a gentleman—a real southern gentleman, too—and there are such, I know, for you and your father have proved it. But I have liked you for it, even when I must have seemed to you most unfeeling, if not actually barbarous."

"So," said I, wholly mollified, "you and Betty West agree?"

"Perfectly. And she is a sensible girl, too. Of course she is *only* a girl, but may not a girl know something?"

"Yes; something, certainly." To the word "something" I gave a decided emphasis, for I did not know to what extent the wisdom of Betty West might be appealed to.

"She doesn't know everything, as the men do,"

she retorted with equally definite meaning, always ready for battle, "but what she does know she knows as well as any one."

This statement of the proposition was so conclusive and irrefutable as to leave no ground for argument. "Both of you think that I should pattern after Philip Deverny, I suppose."

Kate started a little and made haste to answer. "No, John; I have not talked to her about you—that is, not in connection with the war." A tell-tale blush, which I was quick to see, deepened the color of her cheeks. "Lieutenant Deverny has made a good soldier, but you are capable of making a better one. Betty thinks of him, and weeps for him and prays for him. Had the need been, she would have urged him to go, and if necessary she would beg him to stay to the end. And yet she would give her heart's blood to have him with her again. She looks to see his name in every list of killed in battle, yet she glories in his danger, for she knows that he is fighting for his country."

"It is proper for Betty to think and feel these things respecting Deverny since he is acting in a way that pleases her. But suppose he had gone out to fight against the North?"

"Oh, that would have made a very different case," she responded quickly. "If he had done that she would detest him."

“Well, suppose I should conclude to do it; how would you regard me?”

I realized as soon as I had uttered the words that I had put to her an unfair question. She flushed and began to flick in confusion at some thistledown that had lodged on her riding skirt. I made haste to relieve her.

“Don’t you see my position here?” I asked.

“I have seen that you were troubled,” she said, evading a direct answer. “You have shown your feelings plainly.”

“I am troubled,” I exclaimed, all the misery of my position rushing upon me; “I have fretted until my brain has burned and my heart has become at times as dry as a puff-ball. I have waited, hesitating, chafing until almost beside myself. Were it a mere question of saving the Union I would fight for its integrity, and fight to extend its borders if the chance offered. But this is a mere fanatics’ war, a sort of new crusade waged against my Christian kin of the South. The northern men have already made a charnel-house of my native state. Its soil has been red-dened with the blood of my relatives, poured out at their very doorsteps. You must imagine, for I can not tell you, how much I have suffered and endured, how many wakeful nights and bitter days I have passed while struggling between loyalty to the old flag and duty to the people among whom I was born.”

She turned her eyes now full upon me, and in her face I read an encouraging sympathy. But she did not speak, and I, determined to make as good a defense for myself as I could, went on:

"Ah, Kate, if my poor father had been content after the break in his fortunes to remain in Virginia my course would have been easier to choose. But such was his pride that he could not endure his fallen state in the company of those who had known him in prosperity. So he came here, lived a few quiet years and died, thank God, before this unhappy conflict began. But he foresaw it, and his heart remained true to the Old Dominion. Notwithstanding that his dust is mingled with the soil of your country, I would, in my selfishness, for the pain it has caused me, curse the day when he came to the North if it were not—I may as well say it—if it were not for you."

"John, John," she cried impulsively. "You say this, when I have added so much to your burden, and perhaps may add still more, for I am very unruly." She nervously fingered the handle of her riding whip.

"Yes; if you had done many times as much, I would still say it," I declared. "You could not understand all of the difficulties of my situation, and so you have blamed me for not espousing the cause of the North. But do you not know that many who are native here are not

even now clear as to the course that they should pursue ?”

“It is true,” she returned slowly, a shadow upon her fair face. “And how presumptuous you must think me for putting my girl’s opinions against yours and that of my own brother. But Roger talks about the constitution, and reasons and doubts; you argue and hold back; while I, being a woman, feel and believe that I know. That is a woman’s way and privilege, but being a woman, I must perforce stay at home and dream of things I would do if I could, or which, at least, I think I would do. Roger greatly provokes me, though he is the best of brothers.”

I could easily understand how Roger’s conduct affected her, for at this time his relations with neighboring ultra Unionists were far from being amicable. He was suspected of being disloyal, and I, on two occasions, had gone with him to the house of Colonel Mandrell, in Louisville, who was known to have favored the secession of Kentucky. The making of this statement involves no violation of confidence, as will be seen.

What transpired between them the first time I do not know, for shortly after our arrival they withdrew to the Colonel’s library for private converse while I was engaged socially with Mrs. Mandrell and her daughters. Before our departure I was called into the library, and there received most extraordinary proof of the old gen-

tleman's favor. For this, later, I was thankful, as it enabled me to extricate myself from a very disagreeable situation. As to the second occasion, that also will appear.

"Pardon me, Kate," said I, seeing that in my eagerness to excuse myself I had made a mistake. "I had no intention to drag your brother into our little discussion. He is an honorable man; his views, whatever they are, are conscientious and he is entitled to maintain them. I merely referred to a class. As for Roger and me, it has been hard for us both, much harder than you can guess. Your New England schooling has made it difficult for you to bear with us patiently, I fear."

I accompanied this statement with a smile which I meant to be conciliatory, but which she perversely misconstrued. "You laugh at me, sir," she said with spirit, lifting her head defiantly.

"Oh, it is not so bad as that," I hastened to say. "But the air of Massachusetts, so long breathed by the Phillipses and the Garrisons and other fomenters of sectional ill will is not the atmosphere in which tolerance and charity ripen."

This only made the matter worse, and convinced me that I was a poor diplomat. There had been times when I had purposely aroused her, so keenly did I enjoy the flashing of her fine eyes when the subject under discussion was not

too tender. But the present occasion did not warrant such questionable indulgence. To her the men named by me were little short of demigods.

“Do not concern yourself as to how it happens that I think as I do,” said she, with nettled temper. “I surely have proved to you that I have convictions, whatever their source. You may laugh at them, if you please, and at my boast as to what I should do if I were a man. But I know, Mr. Trenham, that your ‘Christian kin of the South,’ as you call them, are seeking to tear down the best government in the world in order that they may continue to hold their fellow-creatures in bondage, and that to this end they have driven the country into a terrible war. If I *were* a man,” she cried, “I would openly take one side or the other. I would take to the field and fight my enemy face to face, and not ally myself with traitors at home, and fight from ambush.”

My face burned hot at the thought that she could consider me capable of such perfidious action as her last words implied, but by an effort I answered her calmly.

“I do not know why you should speak to me of joining traitors at home and fighting from ambush. Nor can I believe that you want to wound me beyond recovery. I take my full measure of blame for all that you have said and implied. Now let us drop this unhappy and profitless topic.

Between us it is like a knife that cuts in the handling, whether we will or no. If we pursue it further it may leave scars that we can never entirely conceal from each other. Besides, we are nearly home."

Always ready for truce as she was for battle, she became suddenly pacific. "You are right, John; sometimes you can be right, can't you?"—this with a glance of the eye that set my heart thumping. "I am a silly goose, and you are a great big, wise, good-natured man. Otherwise how could you suffer my many impertinences, for such they must have appeared to you, although they were actually not so intended. There, now, I am good again; but I really must say things at times."

"So I have learned," said I, laughing, "and you know how to say them, too."

She laughed also, a merry, ringing laugh, as if she were glad of the chance. We had been proceeding slowly, and had come by now to the arched entrance of the maple-shaded lane leading from the highway to her brother's house, which from the top of the knoll looked upon the surrounding country with an air of confident prosperity. There was no gate, only two wide planked posts surmounted by the segment of a circle with a large letter B in the center. Nailed to one of the posts was a fresh, flaring placard, which I could read very well without dismounting.

“What have we here?” I said, drawing rein to inspect the placard.

The first line, in bold type, caught my eyes and held them to the paper, as well it might. It ran thus: “A Military Order.” Then came the following:

“In order to repel invasion and insure the public safety, it is hereby ordered, that all able-bodied white male citizens, between the ages of eighteen and forty-five, *who reside in the counties bordering on the Ohio river*, in this State, immediately upon receiving notice of this order shall meet at their respective places of holding elections in their respective townships, towns or wards, and form themselves into companies for military duty. The members of said companies will immediately arm and equip themselves with such arms and equipments as they can procure, and will prepare themselves, by discipline and drill, for active service with the least possible delay. All persons liable to do military duty, as above provided, will be held to a strict observance of these orders, and the colonel or other officer of the Legion who may be in command in each of said border counties is charged with their faithful execution.”

The order was signed by the governor, as commander-in-chief. It contained some other matters of detail, but the provisions which I have quoted were the ones that concerned me.

“What does it mean?” asked Kate, doubtfully. She had looked it over, but did not seem to have fully grasped its import.

“Very much,” said I, with a great sense of

personal relief. "To me it means freedom and absence; it is the cast of the die. I can not obey this order. To do so would be a wicked stultification of my opinions and conscience. But it makes me free and determines my course, and for that I am thankful."

"And Roger?" she asked, beginning to see.

"He will find a way," I answered, yet I knew that to him this order, if I understood his opinions and character, meant annoyances and possible persecution.

My answer did not seem to satisfy her, and for a little time as we walked our horses toward the house she was silent. Presently she asked: "Is there such great necessity for this extraordinary command? One would think from reading it that the rebels were at our doors redhanded."

"The governor must believe that an emergency exists," I responded. "And perhaps he is right. A Confederate army has started toward the North. It is in Kentucky, and it is said that Louisville is to be taken. From that city Indiana is just across the river. Who knows what may happen?"

"Oh, the traitors!" she exclaimed, raising a clenched hand aloft

"Pardon me," said I deprecatingly; "traitors if they lose their cause. If they win, they will not be so recorded. Historians judge of such things by the result."

"Win or lose, they are traitors just the same. A crime is no less a crime because it is successfully perpetrated," she rejoined firmly.

"And I?"

"And you; you are yet innocent, and I only accuse the guilty," she returned sadly.

Here we came to the gate, from which ran a graveled walk to the house. Dismounting, I reached up my hands and assisted her to alight. I did not mean to delay my departure, and would take my leave of her at once. But it was more difficult than I had thought when contemplating the probability that now faced me as fact.

The war had lasted more than a year, and during all that time I had been living in the borderland of hell and paradise. The dearest creatures on earth to me were here. For their sakes I would make any sacrifice short of my honor. I had honestly tried to convince myself that I should help to uphold the flag and the government under which I was born, but in the opinion of my people that government had become a tyranny, and its flag an emblem of oppression. They were arrayed against it, struggling for what they believed to be right; and, right or wrong, their fortune must be mine. It was a time of blood and passion and unreason. It was hard to see and think clearly, and if I erred it was not strange.

"Kate," said I, "very soon, I fear, I shall be

equally guilty in your eyes with those others. I can not stay here longer. For my honor's sake it would have been better to do before this order what must now be done in the face of it. It looks too much like holding back until forced to make a choice of armies in which to fight, and that were things otherwise I would not go at all. But my mother and you and Roger will know the truth, and I care nothing about what others may think. No man knows what will be the end, or when it will come, but I must play a part in this great tragedy. What fortune or fate has in store for me, and for us all, time will tell. I will not see you again, as I shall leave to-night or to-morrow morning at the latest. Good-bye."

I took her unresisting hand and looking into her face saw that she was deeply moved by some emotion. When she spoke her voice trembled and was very low and soft.

"I am glad, and sorry, too; glad that at last you have settled a question that has vexed you so greatly, and sorry that you have settled it wrongly. Overlook my vanity in assuming that I am right and you wrong, for Roger said truly when he told you that I was incorrigible," she added, attempting a smile, but it was a poor counterfeit of the natural one that had so many times in my presence glorified her countenance and warmed me with its sunshine. "Wherever you are, God be with you. Good-bye."

She turned from me, but not before I had seen that her eyes were suffused with tears. Mounting my horse I rode away. Looking back as I turned into the highway I saw her standing by the gate, and a white handkerchief fluttered from her upraised hand. A truce, indeed.

A little further along I passed Roger, but did not stop. Turning again presently, I saw that he was apparently reading the placard on the post. Then came a sweeping motion of his arm, and he cut it down with his carriage whip.

CHAPTER IV

GIVE ME ROAD, SIRS

As I made my way home I felt elated and almost happy, but as one from whose limbs shackles had just been removed, leaving them galled and sore from long chafing. No doubt as to my mother's consent to my going now troubled me. She could see as clearly as I that there was no other manly course open to me. But the only anxiety that disquieted me concerned her. How would she be treated by the extreme loyalists when it became known that her son had at last cast his fortunes with the people of the South whom they held to be rebels and traitors? That seemed to me to be a serious question; yet as she was a woman of tact and lived quietly, giving offense to none, she would probably suffer no serious molestation.

Besides, she would have the protection of Roger Bellray, if she should at any time be threatened. He had given me to understand that if ever I should make up my mind to leave I could do so without fearing in the least for her welfare. So strong and masterful was his personality, and so

numerous and powerful were his friends, that the most rabid would hesitate before provoking an open breach with him.

These considerations reassured me, and I entered my mother's house with all doubts and anxieties dissipated. I found her in her room, where she had gone to rest from the day's fatigue before coming down to the evening meal which she had ordered to wait my return. I had always been very proud of my mother, who retained so much of the good looks of her younger days. She had never cared much for society, and so was not greatly disturbed by her present isolation from the old familiar scenes and places.

Latterly the bright young faces of Kate Bellray and Betty West had appeared often in our house, greatly relieving its somberness, if, in truth, that quietness which had rested within its walls since father's death can properly be called somber. The liveliness of their spirits greatly revived her own, and I felt that I could trust them to continue their ministrations. Indeed, my absence, I felt sure, would serve to encourage one of these girls to increase the frequency of her visits.

The war was a topic that my mother avoided in my presence as much as possible, hardly ever broaching it herself, and tactfully getting away from it when I brought it up, as I did very often. Not that she lacked interest in it—for I knew that it must be otherwise; her seeming indifference was

on my account. While meaning to be dutiful and affectionate, as I felt that I was in all respects, I was assertive and impetuous, and inclined to rebel against the restraints that detained me from the activities of the field.

Of course I did not put it that way before her, or rave and tear my hair and accuse her of selfishness or a lack of regard for my feelings. Very far from it; but she understood, and aimed only at drawing me away as much as she could from the evident cause of my distress. I think, after she became convinced that the war was to be prolonged, she never really believed that she could do more than postpone the day of our separation.

And now, when I told her how matters stood, she did not make my lot harder by giving way to tears and protestation. On the contrary, after the first shock had spent its force, she affected a cheerfulness that I knew she did not feel, and at once set about the task of arranging the few necessary belongings that I would take with me.

That night, while in my room making preparations for my departure, there came a knock at the door. Supposing it to be Peter come to take orders as to getting my horse ready I called out that he should come in, not suspending my work or looking around. The latch clicked, a step sounded on the carpeted floor, and then a hand slapped me on the back. Annoyed, I turned

about to rebuke the familiarity, when I saw that the visitor was Roger Bellray.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Bellray; I thought it was Peter," I said in excuse of my apparent incivility.

"It is for me to apologize for intruding upon your privacy," he said; "but I thought we could talk while you worked, and I could not let you go away without seeing you."

He took a seat by the open window that looked out toward the road, and I explained to him that I was glad he had come as I intended to be on my way at midnight.

"Your resolution is somewhat suddenly taken, is it not?" he asked.

"The balance tipped against me and I have no honorable alternative," I answered, yet in a moment regretting that I expressed it that way, for his face colored with offense.

"You refer to the order commanding all able-bodied men to join the Legion," he said curtly, and with something like a sneer.

"The same that I saw you strike from your post," I returned.

"That was my legal privilege, the post being my property and situated on my ground. I will teach even the legionaries that I still control what is my own, and that my consent to its use must still be sought."

"Of course," said I, smiling in spite of myself, for his manner was earnest to the point of intensity, "you took no exceptions to the placard itself?"

"I have no right to do so," he answered, fairly. "It gives notice of an order that is proper for the governor to issue, and one which should be obeyed by all who feel that they can conscientiously obey it. When one acts within his rights, be he a private citizen or public official, I have no quarrel with him. No man shall ever accuse me of denying to another what I claim for myself."

I had missed my point. There was no room to doubt his sincerity, and as I looked into his steady blue eyes, I saw behind them a resolute and daring spirit, which would defy the world if need be, and ask neither favor nor odds.

"But, damn them, they can't use my posts without asking my permission," he continued hotly, and then he added, as if quickly repenting of his outburst: "Don't mind me, Trenham; I am an impatient man, at the best, and just now I am entirely upset. Everything is going wrong about here. Like a man walking on ice, I can't tell when my feet will slip from under me."

"Lucky you'll be if there is nothing tied to your neck when they do slip," said I, encouragingly.

He looked at me, half smiling. "You think

I stand a chance to be hanged, do you? Well, don't worry about that; the rope is not made that will hang Roger Bellray," he said, without a quiver.

"Possibly not; but they are making ropes every day, and some of these stay-at-homes are itching to use them."

"Look here, my lad, what's the matter with you? Why do you talk so grewsomely? Are you scared?"

"Why should I be afraid?" I answered. "I will presently be well out of this if there is no bad luck lying in wait for me. And as to you, my friend, for heaven's sake be careful. I am not old enough or experienced enough to give you advice, but somehow I have felt for some time, and now more strongly than ever, that dangers here are increasing."

"Tush! You have heard the barking of a lot of coon hounds who only fill the air with their yelping. And then, what do I care for danger?" he cried. "It only gives relish to life, which is dull and commonplace without it. You prefer the field as I did at your age, but now I would rather be a conspirator, quietly contriving with others to uphold a principle or defend a right, with the halter as the penalty for failure. It gives to your actions a keener zest, and sharpens every waking hour, aye, and most of your sleeping ones, with the possibility of discovery before you are

ready to act. You can not be certain of friend or foe, and the man on whom you most rely may be the first to betray you."

"Indeed," said I, "it is a game not at all to my liking."

"Compared with it," he rejoined, "your shooting and carving is but a vulgar sport. Mind you, I do not say that I am a conspirator; I do not hold myself to be such, but people give different names to the same thing. One who marks out a course for himself counter to that pursued by the majority, as I have, must proceed cautiously to avoid conflict, and very often he is driven to do in secret what he would much prefer to do openly and above board."

"And hence," said I, "the institution of the knightly Order of the Acorn."

"Which you refused to join, even after I had explained its purposes. I do not blame you for that. Every man must act according to his view." He sighed a little disappointedly.

"Whatever may be your purposes, your organization, when it is known, will be held treasonable. I remember who is governor here, and I do not care to put my head in this lion's mouth. He may do no roaring, but he will strike. Besides, you and these others and myself are on a different footing altogether. You belong here and I can not feel that I do, and so refuse to mix in your local disagreements. As I understand it,

you do not favor the war from any standpoint, while I, upon the issue as I see it, am with the South and can't help it. I am going to join Morgan, if I can reach him, and he will give me at least plenty of exercise."

"Yes, and plenty of fighting, too, and luck be with you; I knew him in Mexico, then a young dare-devil of a lieutenant of cavalry," said he, warmly. "As for me and my friends, we mean to look out for ourselves and aid those who, in these terrible times, will need aid such as we hope to give, that's all. We are just as much entitled to our opinions as anybody else, and the fact that, without hope of glory, we hazard everything, life and home and honor, in defense of these opinions should be a sufficient guaranty of their sincerity."

He stopped for a minute while he lighted a cigar; then he went on:

"This is a fanatics' war, as you have often declared to me, but the fanatics are not all in the North—not by a long shot. In common with thousands of others, I had hoped a conflict would be averted, but the fools in the North and the fools in the South dug the pit and expect us, who had no hand in the digging, to throw ourselves into it so that they can ride over us to glory. Fourteen years ago, when a boy of twenty-two, I carried a musket into the City of Mexico. One of Santa Anna's bullets is still in my body. And

here," he said, raising the long mustache that drooped over his left cheek, hiding a short, ragged scar, "is where a Mexican bayonet enlarged my mouth. I don't speak of these things to exonerate myself from a suspicion of cowardice, but merely to show that a man may be willing to fight a foreign enemy, yet remain a non-combatant in a strife between his own countrymen. At any rate, I shall be responsible for my own conduct; whatever risks I take are my risks, and whatever end I may come to is my end. In all the wide world there is only one person who will long care what may happen to me, and that is my sister. You know how I love that girl, John. Since the death of our mother, ten years ago, I have guarded her as the very apple of my eye. She was but eight then, and while I suppose she is a woman now, she is still a child to me."

While speaking of Kate his voice softened, and both words and manner indicated profound affection and solicitude.

"She is thoroughly loyal to the government, and if she were of our sex I verily believe there would be no keeping her out of the army. At times she makes it rather uncomfortable for me."

He paused for a moment, and then continued, reflectively: "I wonder how she will act when she comes to know the whole truth about me? That is what worries me, John. The only thing that makes me hesitate to pursue the course I

have chosen is the fear of her reproaches. When I think about that it almost makes a coward of me."

"And what will she think of me?" I asked, making a pretense of unconcern by taking up and examining one of the pistols that I had laid upon the table. But I could not as easily disguise my feelings, and was conscious that my voice carried a tone of uneasiness. As he did not make immediate answer I lifted my eyes and found him looking at me intently. Then I could not wait for him to speak.

"Mr. Bellray," said I, with shaking voice, and not as connectedly, I fear, as I here set down my words, "since I may not see you again—and, at best, will not see you soon—it is just as well that I tell you how matters stand with me. I love Kate; I have never told her so, and now may never have an opportunity to tell her, but I love her with all my heart. If the time ever comes when I can say this to her she will doubtless spurn me as unworthy. She will readily forgive you, her brother, but not another, I fear. No one knows better than I how she feels, and that has prevented me from telling her what I have just told you. If I survive, it may be that she will not be too hard on me; if I do not—well, tell her how I tried to persuade myself to do as she wanted me to do."

I turned away my face to hide its burning, af-

fecting some excuse, for I was young and not practiced in such avowals.

"You know that I have always thought well of you, John," he said. "If I did not think so now I would be quick enough to tell you. You say you have never spoken to Kate, but I can easily guess how she feels toward you. And I very much mistake her spirit if it does not happen that she will think in the end vastly more of you for following your convictions than she would if you should for any reason, least of all to satisfy her, act the part of a sneak and hypocrite by believing one thing and doing another."

I took his hand, and, pressing it fervently, thanked him for what he had said, for it had done me good. He looked at his watch and rose to go.

"Now, my boy, since you have determined to leave so summarily I must not detain you, as you will have to make your farewells to your mother. As to her—and it is one reason why I came to-night—her safety shall be my responsibility. Honestly, however, I believe that you need fear nothing on her account. There are plenty of fellows about here who would get after you or me, but they are not likely to war with a woman. I think I am justified in putting that to their credit in advance."

I followed him out of the house, and saw him mount his horse and ride away in the moonlight,

alert and confident. He was the sort of man who would flinch from no danger, if, through the peril, lay the road to an object which he was bent on accomplishing.

His courage fed on antagonism, and the more he was opposed the more aggressive he became. An opinion entertained at first in a casual way became, if combated, a settled conviction which he would thenceforth maintain at all hazards so long as it was made the subject of dispute.

Stern and uncompromising as to those things in which he believed, he was yet tolerant of the rights of others, and had acquired a wide influence in all the surrounding country, which, while it afforded him a sort of protection, was also destined to be the cause of his undoing.

Returning into the house, I finished my preparations, aided by my mother, who, dear woman, acted most nobly. And when at last Peter brought around my horse, a splendid animal of great speed and endurance, which I depended upon to carry me into the Confederate lines, and to serve me afterward, she smiled as she kissed me, as if she could conceal from me the knowledge that her poor heart was on the point of breaking.

But it was not in her nature to part from me thus. She overestimated her strength of will, and at the last minute broke down and wept and clung to me as if she would not give me up.

After a time she controlled her feelings and bade me good-bye with composure, but the picture of her distress was in my mind for many a day.

My calculation was, by easy traveling, to reach Louisville early on the following morning, my further progress to be guided by circumstances, and by such information as I could there procure from Colonel Mandrell. I apprehended no danger in making the twenty-five miles that lay between my mother's house and the Kentucky metropolis.

Yet I did not forget that the whole country was aroused over the reported proximity of the Confederate army. Many of the country people believed that it was even then besieging Louisville, while still others, equally ill-informed but more fearful, had it that that city had already fallen before the rebel assault, and that Indiana was to be immediately invaded and laid waste. Such rumors as these were already current, and the governor's order assembling the legionaries, and commanding all of military age to prepare for active duty in repelling invasion would add fuel to the fire of unrest and alarm that was consuming all the borderland.

By traveling at night I might be saved the annoyance of many awkward questions, even if I should subject myself to suspicion from such as I might, by chance, pass or overtake on the road. But these I reckoned would be few, since the

country was not yet regularly patrolled as it was very soon afterward. No doubt, however, as to my ability to satisfy all inquiries and disarm the over-curious possessed me.

I exulted in my new freedom, and as I rode along, expanding my chest with the sweet night air, the spirit of adventure rose within me, and I felt equal to any fate. Excepting my pistols, I was unarmed, for I did not yet desire to assume too much of a war-like appearance, my purpose being to make my way as quietly as possible, as any citizen might do whose mission was peaceful.

I had covered the first few miles of my journey without any kind of interruption, and was congratulating myself on the good fortune that this fact seemed to augur, when, far down the road ahead of me, I heard badly-attuned voices of men raised in song. At first I could not tell whether the singers were going from or coming toward me, but very soon I knew that they were approaching. Now and then one would withdraw his attention from the chorus long enough to shout long and loud, without any other apparent object than that of testing the power of his lungs. Presently they came close enough for me to make out the words of the composition.

“We’ll hang Jeff Davis on a sour apple tree,”

ran the line of the chorus, which was three times repeated; then came the roaring final line,

“As we go marching on.”

After this there was a brief period of loud talking, a little more shouting, and then the singing of the following improvisation, to the same tune:

“We’re going down to Louisville to meet old General Bragg,
And in the fight, if he wants one, you’ll see none of us lag,
And we’ll drive him back to Tennessee, behind his dirty flag,
As we go marching on.”

We approached each other rapidly, but so interested were they in their singing and shouting that they did not observe me until I had started to turn aside to give them the road. There were three of them, roystering young farmers returning home from drill with the legionaries, I conjectured, and half intoxicated. Seeing me they checked their horses, and one of them called out tipsily in his newly acquired military phrase:

“Halt! Who goes there?”

“A friend,” said I, falling into his humor.

“Why,” said another of the three, “damned if it ain’t the young Virginny fellow, boys, who lives over there by Roger Bellray, the butternut; the one that I was telling you about.”

"Mebbe you can trade horses with him, Spelker," said the first speaker, laughing good naturedly.

They blocked the road, and as I was anxious to proceed and did not like the voice of the one called Spelker, who was much older in appearance than his two companions, I determined to make the interview a short one.

"Give me road, gentlemen, and allow me to pass," I said.

But Spelker was not through yet. I recognized in him a horse buyer who was said to practice swindling operations at the expense of the government, and he appeared bent on extending his acquaintance.

"I believe you are running off to join the secesh," he said, riding his horse up to mine menacingly.

"I am pursuing my way peacefully," I answered, though my temper was rising at his insolence, "and desire to be allowed to proceed."

"Well, there's no hurry, I guess; I want to ask you a few questions first, and then mebbe we will let you go on, and mebbe we won't."

Reaching out his hand he caught hold of my bridle rein. I restrained an impulse to strike the fellow, and asked: "By what authority do you question me?"

"Just because I want to; that's authority enough for me."

"But it is not for me," said I, by this time having, without attracting his attention, possessed myself of one of my pistols, "and I decline to be questioned. Take your hand from my rein, sir."

"My young rooster, I'll have to clip your comb for you," he cried, raising the butt of his heavy riding whip threateningly.

Before it could descend I leaned quickly out and struck him full on the side of the head with the heavy pistol, at the same instant driving home my spurs. My horse sprung forward, and as I raced along I heard the curses of Spelker, which were answered by the derisive laughter of his companions, from which I judged that they were not sorry for his discomfiture.



" . . . I STRUCK HIM FULL ON THE SIDE OF THE HEAD WITH
THE HEAVY PISTOL." *page 62.*



CHAPTER V

THE THIRD ONE AT MANDRELL'S

WITHOUT further incident I reached about daybreak the town of New Albany, a few miles down the river from Louisville. Here the heights were ominous with heavy cannon, which frowned over the fords and lowlands from hastily constructed fortifications, and told of the preparations that were being made to receive the invader and hurl him back if he should attempt to cross the river. Many citizens were already stirring, but little attention was bestowed upon me. In response to an inquiry for news, I was told that the rebel general, Bragg, was expected before Louisville at any hour, as he had, my informant understood, the evening before sent forward a message demanding the surrender of that city.

Following the road leading eastward, parallel with the north bank of the Ohio but separated from it by some hundreds of yards, I saw, as I went along, groups of armed men here and there gazing anxiously southward. Scattered among them and occupying positions of vantage for

sight-seeing were early-risen residents of the locality, who, if less warlike in appearance than the others, were no less concerned.

I could see them excitedly talking and gesticulating and pointing frequently across the broad river that lay between them and the yet unseen rebel host, its bosom alive with every kind of craft capable of carrying guns. But it was in front of them, and not behind, that the danger lay, so I passed on and reached the Louisville ferry without molestation or question. Having marked out my course, I proceeded boldly, with no hesitation or visible timidity, though I confess to a feeling of disquietude.

When the boat had tied up on the Kentucky side an officer with two or three men came aboard before any were allowed to land. The passengers were not many, consisting principally of gardeners and hucksters bringing provisions into the beleagured city who were vouched for by the ferryman as regular patrons. I observed that the officer performed his duty somewhat perfunctorily as though it were a useless formality, and felt relieved. My turn to be questioned came, the officer first demanding to know my name.

"John Trenham, sir," said I, looking him in the face. There was a sudden, almost imperceptible contracting of his eyelids, but no other change in his features.

"From where do you come, Mr. Trenham?" he next asked, placidly.

"From my mother's home, near Corydon." If I had said that I came from the moon his countenance would, I am certain, have given no sign of surprise.

"Why are you coming to Louisville?"

"To fight, sir," I said, "if I get a chance," meaning to satisfy and yet deceive my interrogator by telling him the simple truth. In both of these respects I felt that I had succeeded, for he told me without further ado that I could go on my way, which I lost no time in doing.

Once within the city I found that even at this early hour great activity and excitement prevailed in the streets and public places. It seemed that all of the inhabitants had been abroad for hours, if indeed they had sought their beds at all during the previous night. The shops and stores were closed and shuttered, and business of all kinds was suspended. Upon every face there was a look of expectancy, and many hot eyes showed dread as of an impending calamity.

At places where there was open ground, squads of men in citizens' clothes were marching and maneuvering at the command of drill-masters, who were in most instances in uniform, while standing about watching them, silent and lowering, were still other citizens.

Between the drillers and the on-lookers there was, I knew, a wide and bitter difference of opinion, and but for the restraining presence of the soldiery with which the city was filled they would willingly have flown at each other's throats. For this was a border metropolis which embraced within its walls a population sharply divided between loyalists and disunionists, but now it was in control of the national authorities who were preparing to hold it against the threatened attack of the Confederate general.

I sought a hotel, and stabling my horse near by, determined to spend the day quietly, and did so, for the most part staying in my room and getting sleep and rest that might stand me well. Not knowing how matters might be with him, I made no effort throughout the day to communicate with Colonel Mandrell, who, be it understood, was not now a military officer as his title might imply.

He had commanded a regiment with distinction in the last war. Now he was not only out of favor with the national government but was believed, with reason, to hold intimate relations with the secessionists. So far no act justifying his arrest had been traced to him, and he had gone in and out unhampered and defiant. I deemed it wise, however, to take no unnecessary chances, and did not set out for his house until well after darkness had fallen.

A walk of a half a mile or thereabout carried

me beyond the blocks of business houses and into a residence district, upon which the needs of trade had not then encroached. Turning into the street upon which the Mandrell residence was situated, I quickened my steps and soon reached an iron gate opening upon the lawn surrounding a large brick mansion of old fashion, standing well back from the street. Lifting the latch I went in, and, observing nothing unusual, strode confidently up to the door and rang the bell loudly.

I was not kept waiting long, for the reverberations of the bell had not died away when the door was opened and a young man of attractive visage, standing within the glare of the hall lamp, bade me enter. This surprised me not a little, as I had expected to see the face of a negro servant of the house, but I accepted the invitation and entered. Following the young man into the parlor, I asked if I could see Colonel Mandrell.

"I fear not," he responded, smiling pleasantly. "Colonel Mandrell has felt, let us say, obliged, temporarily to depart from his comfortable house." Here he waved his hand about as if directing my attention to the luxurious appointments of the room.

"Indeed," said I, still more surprised; "you are a friend of the family, I suppose?"

"Well, not exactly so; to tell the truth—and no good can come from deceiving you—I have no

acquaintance with the Colonel's family, which I understand to be a very estimable one."

"Then, pray, sir, may I ask in what capacity I am to address you in making my further inquiries?" said I, feeling nettled, and yet conscious that no cause for offense had been given.

"In the capacity, I should say," he returned, still smiling, "of an unwelcome guest who, in pursuance of orders, has been compelled to intrude himself into a house upon which he has no claims to hospitality."

I must have looked the amazement I felt upon hearing this confession, smoothly made and accompanied by a bow as graceful as that of a dancing master.

"This is most extraordinary, sir," I exclaimed, "and as a friend of Colonel Mandrell, as well as of his wife and daughters, I must demand of you an explanation of this very unusual state of affairs."

The young man was not in the least ruffled or abashed by my vehemence, and politely asked me to be seated, for I had so far remained standing.

"I can not accept courtesies from you," I said, impatiently, "which should come from those who rightfully belong here. Perhaps you can tell me whether any member of Colonel Mandrell's family is in the house?"

"Believe me, sir," he made answer, "I sincerely regret to tell you that neither Mrs. Man-

drell nor either of the Misses Mandrell—for I understand there are two—is present to greet you. In their absence I must do the best I can, and what I lack in grace and cordiality I shall endeavor to make up in other qualities which will doubtless commend me to my superiors.”

“Then,” I said, with a feeling of danger which, though vague at first, was rapidly taking definite form, “in the absence of the persons whom I came to see there is nothing for me to do but to take my departure.”

I turned as if to go, with the almost certain knowledge that I should not be allowed to do so. To test the situation I took a step across the floor in the direction of the door.

“You will pardon me, sir,” said the unbidden guest in the same pleasant tones that he had used from the beginning of the interview, “but a duty which I owe to those who are taking an interest in Colonel Mandrell’s friends while he is away requires me to detain you.”

It was clear to me that I was a prisoner in the house in which I had expected to be welcomed in quite different fashion.

“You mean to say that I am now under arrest,” I returned quietly enough but in a voice hard and grating with the anger I was trying to repress. “You have first driven out, or possibly imprisoned, the owner of this house and his fam-

ily, and then hidden yourself here to entrap his visitors."

"I did not say that you were under arrest," he protested, deprecatingly; "what I said, was, that my duty required me to detain you. Possibly you can satisfy Captain Bracken that your detention is unjust; if so, it will give me great pleasure to show you to the door and bid you good-night."

"And where may I find this Captain Bracken?" I asked, curiosity now keeping company with my fears, for though I had not seen the Captain, I had heard much about him from Roger Bellray.

"If you will do me the honor to follow me," said he, with unshaken imperturbability, "I will take you to him at once. There is no disposition to delay you longer than may be necessary."

He walked out of the room into the hall, where I saw that, as I had suspected, the door was guarded by a man with a musket, who was no doubt there when I entered, but concealed from my view by the heavy curtain of the vestibule window. My guide led me down the corridor to a room that I distinctly remembered as having been Colonel Mandrell's library.

The door was opened, and I went in in advance of my conductor. The only change that I noticed in the room was in the occupant. In the place of the tall form and iron-gray head of the owner of the house there was a sun-browned

man of medium size, with a stubby, dark mustache. He was possibly forty years old and had more the appearance and manner of a sergeant of police than of a military man. This man was sitting in an easy chair by a table and seemed to be enjoying his comfortable surroundings. As I was ushered into his presence he looked up keenly.

"The third one, McGrane," he said, inspecting me but addressing his subordinate. "They are coming early, and quite regularly, too. Thank you, lieutenant; you need not stay. Now, sir," speaking to me, "you may be seated, if you wish."

"I prefer to stand until I know the nature of the business you have with me," I answered, shortly.

"As you please, of course," he returned, "but I rather like to sit down when I get a chance, and that's not often in these days." He eyed me closely and then added: "I don't believe I have seen you recently, Mr. Trenham."

"And I, although you have my name, have no recollection of ever having seen you at all until now," I said, annoyed by his manner, "and my pleasure in meeting you is one that I should willingly have foregone."

"Which proves how little we are appreciated by those upon whom we bestow even our choicest attentions," he rejoined, smiling grimly.

Although both Lieutenant McGrane and Captain Bracken had so far treated me with great civility, my position was becoming more and more unbearable.

"Captain Bracken," I demanded somewhat warmly, putting on a bold front, "I desire to be informed why I, a friend of Colonel Mandrell, am thus detained in his house by strangers?"

"I think it is very likely because you are a friend of the Colonel," he answered. "You may or may not know that he has suddenly left his house—I should judge from your conduct that you did not know until told by Lieutenant McGrane—but such appears to be the fact. As to the cause of his leaving, why, you may possibly have a suspicion."

As I was in a fair way at last to be enlightened I maintained silence, and he went on:

"Where he is now I do not know, but should like to. He probably has not left the city, for that would be a very difficult thing for him to do; and if I or any of my men lay hands on him his stay here will be—well, at least indefinite. Now, sir, what have you to say for yourself?"

His manner changed abruptly, and I knew he had come to the point at last.

"Of what am I accused?" I asked. "Until I know that, I can say nothing."

"That is a proper question for you to ask, and perhaps you could also answer it easier

than I. But let me state the charge this way: As Colonel Mandrell's friend by your own admission you visit his house on the evening appointed for the gathering of a few friends of the Confederacy, their purpose being to devise ways and means to assist General Bragg in getting into the city. Such a meeting, you will acknowledge, could not be overlooked by those who are interested in keeping General Bragg out."

"I know nothing of this gathering," said I, truthfully. "I arrived in Louisville this day, and have not seen Colonel Mandrell since—"

"Since the night of the 14th day of August," he said, interrupting me; "that being a Sunday night when many good people were at church. But our friend had quite a good congregation of his own, eh? Among this congregation, as you will doubtless remember, were representatives from at least two societies, one of them called the *Corps de Belgique*, or some such nonsense, and the other that somewhat more extensive and not less pestiferous organization with which your friend—for so I take him to be—Roger Bellray, is unfortunately supposed to be too actively connected. You see that I am opening my mind to you in a most unofficial way."

"Well?" said I, as he paused.

"Is that all the defense you desire to make?" he questioned.

"In all that you have said there is yet no ac-

cusation against me of violating any law," I responded, "and I demand that I be allowed to depart."

"You are exceedingly hard to satisfy, my young friend, and are either very innocent or very deep; hang me if I know which, to be honest with you," he said, showing some perplexity. "But it is my duty to send you to headquarters on a charge of *conspiring against the government*. That will suffice to detain you, for you can see how impossible it is, Mr. Trenham, that you should be released to-night. Be pleased to remain where you are while I call McGrane. The windows? Yes, since you observe them, I may say that they are guarded. Your life will be in less peril, for the present, by staying where you are."

He went out, closing the door behind him and locking it. Then something happened that he plainly did not expect. I stood in my tracks until satisfied that he had gone away from the door; then, losing not an instant of time, I stepped softly to the side of the room where several cases filled with books occupied all of the wall save a space of three or four inches that for some reason had been left between them.

Stopping before the second case, counting from the left hand wall, I thrust one hand between it and the next case on the right and found a groove into which I inserted my fingers. Pulling stoutly,

the case moved outward at that side until there was room enough for me to get behind it. There I found a door opening into a space within as I had been advised. Opening the door, I hurried through and pulled the bookcase into its former position, taking pains to adjust a stout hook by which the case would be held securely in place against the wall.

I was now in Stygian blackness, standing, as I knew, in a small closet built between the walls. From this closet led a narrow flight of steps stopping in a little passage at the bottom which had originally afforded an entrance to the cellar. But more than that, it gave access to another sub-surface passage made of thick timbers in the long gone days when the pioneers resorted to secret devices in order to escape, in a last extremity, the torch and the tomahawk of the Indian.

A frontier blockhouse once stood on this spot, and from beneath it had run this road to possible liberty and life. Here Colonel Mandrell's father, when he came to erect the present house, had found it, and here he had allowed it to remain through respect for the hardy settlers who had made it, and gratitude for a service it had rendered. For it was a matter of family history that by this means his own mother, among others, had found safety while howling savages danced around the burning building overhead.

But while the elder Mandrell suffered the un-

derground way to remain he did not leave it entirely undisturbed. It pleased his somewhat eccentric fancy to connect it with that part of the new house most frequented by himself—the library,—where were his books, and the cellar, where was his choice store of liquors, and also with the substantial stable that he had erected upon his premises for the accommodation of the fine horses which, next to his family, his books and his liquors, gave him his chief delight. I did not know how much it had been used, but this I did know, that the cellar entrance had been bricked up and effectually concealed, as had also the entrance to the lower part of the stable.

Being thus secure for the time, and hidden from observation, I determined to await the return to the room of my would-be captors, with the view of possibly acquiring information that might be of use to me.

The man called Captain Bracken was an officer in the national secret service with a wide reputation. It was known that he was keen and relentless in the discharge of his duties, but it was also said of him that he need be feared only by the guilty. And while I was not yet, at least, one of that class—my guilt so far being limited to a purpose to join the enemies of the government under which he was working—I did not want to have my plans interrupted by submitting to a detention that might be prolonged.

How much he really knew of me I did not care; that he knew less than he professed was beyond question. On the Sunday night to which he had referred I had visited Colonel Mandrell, but I had done so at the request of Bellray without expectation of meeting any person other than the Colonel and his family. And what is more, I had no knowledge of designs which might not be honorably entertained in time of war by men whose convictions were opposed to one of the parties to the contest, even though that party be the Washington government.

A charge of conspiracy against that government was one, however, that I did not desire to face. It was a charge now frequently made, as I had heard, and many men were being held in prison to answer it, with still larger numbers in this department under the surveillance of Captain Bracken and his agents. It would at least serve to deprive me of my liberty for a time, and might do more. As I was not a resident of the city, but had come into it when the military, and not the civil, law was in force, and had at once under cover of darkness visited a known enemy of the North who was no doubt in friendly communication with the invading army, my position would be compromising, if not serious.

Several minutes elapsed before anybody came into the room I had just left. Then I heard the voices of Bracken and McGrane lifted in ex-

clamations of surprise upon making the discovery of my absence, both speaking at once, which rendered it difficult for me to understand their precise words. A moment of bewildered silence followed, during which, I suppose, they were alternately looking at each other, and taking a survey of the room after the manner of human kind. Then came the voice of McGrane, as suave and care-free as if the most pleasing thing in the world had happened.

"Ah, Captain, our wingless bird has flown, sure enough—and such an interesting bird."

"And to think, McGrane, that he came to fight if he got a chance—isn't that what Tapper reported this morning? We meant to deprive him of the chance, but perhaps it will come to him yet. Now, where did he get out? Look sharp!"

I heard them walking about moving articles of furniture and otherwise making search for the place of my egress. Presently they stopped near my hiding place.

"McGrane," said the Captain, "he didn't leave by the windows, for the guard is without and they are still fastened on the inside. Nor did he go through these walls, which appear to be solid enough; besides, we don't have houses nowadays with hidden staircases, secret passages doors opening in impossible places on touching concealed springs, and all that folderol. Old

Mandrell is the kind of a duck who would like to fool us that way, but bosh ! You and I, McGrane, know a thing or two. This young man went out through the door, to which doubtless he has a duplicate key, and is yet somewhere in the house. Have it searched. And he really wanted a chance to fight; well, he looks as if he could do it, and acted so, too."

"Too bad to spoil his chance, Captain, isn't it?" McGrane said, as he left the room.

It was now time for me to act, as I could accomplish nothing more by staying longer.

Going noiselessly down the steps, trusting more to feeling than knowledge, I carefully made my way along the passage until I came to the brick wall at its end. Here, on the left, reaching out my hands, I found a stout wooden door, which I succeeded in opening without any difficulty, for it was not locked, and seemed to serve the single purpose of shutting off from the house the drafts and damp of the outer passage into which it opened. Before closing the door I paused and listened. Sounds from above came to me muffled and indistinct, but they were not of a character to tell me anything more.

Without waiting longer I went into the outer passage and groped along between the damp wooden walls some fifty paces or more to a point where it turned abruptly to the right. A little further on I stumbled upon a stairway leading

upward. I now knew that I was near the end of my underground journey.

A few steps upward brought me into contact with what proved to be a trap-door which I judged to be on a level with the ground's surface. It was fastened on its under side, thus showing that the secret way was last arranged for use from the house alone. To loosen the door was but the work of a moment, and pushing it aside I went cautiously through.

Although I had never before attempted to thread this hidden pathway I had been told by Colonel Mandrell, when he made me acquainted with its existence, that it could be followed without fear to the end. So, feeling about me from where I stood, my hands fell upon a ladder which I at once climbed until again stopped by planking overhead. Here was a second trap-door which, like the other, was also fastened on the underside.

I tried the heavy bolt, but it did not yield readily. Exerting more strength it finally gave way, and lifting the door a little there came an inrush of fresh air laden with the grateful odor of hay. It was like incense to my nostrils after breathing the foul atmosphere through which I had been journeying. Through a window at the side of a spacious loft near me the moonlight streamed in and enabled me to get a tolerable

view of my surroundings, and see that there was nothing to cause alarm.

Holding the trap-door only partly lifted, I listened, and, hearing no sound save that made by a horse crunching hay somewhere below, I raised it and stepped out into the loft. For a few moments I stood looking about me. The opening by which I had entered was in one corner, and all around was scattered loose hay, the great bulk of the feed being a little removed.

Stooping to close the trap I saw something shining near the top of the ladder, which a closer inspection showed to be the hilt of a scabbarded sword hanging on the wall of the secret chamber; near by was a pair of holstered pistols. Of these I lost no time in possessing myself, for my own weapons I had left in my room at the hotel and I had no intention of returning there to claim them. Then replacing the door and spreading the hay as it had probably been before I disturbed it so as to leave no trace of my forthcoming, I made ready to go below. But I first assured myself as well as I could that the stable was not watched, which being done I descended to the ground floor.

I looked around for the horse that I had heard, having no fancy for walking and still less disposition to take the risk of seizure involved in recovering my own animal, though I regretted to

abandon him, for I had taught him to know me and come at my call wherever he might be. The horse which I was determined to take in place of it was the only one remaining in the stalls, and seemed to me, as nearly as I could form an opinion of it in the shadows of the stable, to be a fine one. Without a moment's hesitation, but quietly, I equipped it with saddle and bridle, and, again satisfying myself that the way was clear, led it out into the alley.

CHAPTER VI

WITH FACE TOWARD THE SOUTH

I DID not mount at once, but taking the horse by the bit I led it some distance along the narrow alley, being careful to keep on the side where the shadows of the buildings would most protect me from observation. When I had in this way removed myself so far that there was no longer immediate danger to be feared from those who had made so free with Mandrell's house, and who had so nearly succeeded in playing a sorry joke upon me, I stopped and inspected a bundle that was attached to the saddle. It proved to be a long weather coat. This I shook out and put on, considering myself fortunate in the discovery, for it concealed the arms of which I had so summarily possessed myself, and enabled me to retain the appearance of a civilian traveler, which I was not yet prepared to throw aside.

Up to this time my adventure had not turned out badly, save in the matter of the information of which I was deprived, and which I had intended to be the guide of my further movements. I was left to my own resources, which, perforce, were

not reassuring. In all this city, filled to overflowing with citizens and soldiers, I did not know where to put my hand this night upon a friend. The one thing that stood out clear in my mind was that I must leave without delay and try to reach the invading army, which was somewhere to the southward but how close nobody seemed to know.

It was not the kind of a night that I would have preferred for my undertaking, but my necessities left me no choice. And, as luck attends upon audacity as often as it favors the carefully laid plans of the timorous, I felt that my chances for escaping from the city were worth putting to the test if boldness accompanied the trial.

Once in the saddle and astride the fine horse so providentially supplied, a disposition to dare took control of me and drove out all wavering. As I rode along, seeking out the quiet streets yet avoiding any appearance of stealth, and pursuing a direction tending toward the southwesterly part of the city, I saw and heard on all sides evidences of strain. The hour was yet early—probably not more than ten o'clock. The populace, uncertain as to what was in store, was all astir, and filled with excitement.

All day long troops for the defense of the city had poured in from the north; these were all new levies—mostly raw and ill-equipped militia and legionaries, the latter not uniformed and variously

armed. Upon these untried men must the commandant depend to assist his meager garrison in holding the expected assailants in check until the disciplined soldiers of Buell, then on Bragg's heels, should come to the rescue.

From my window at the hotel I had seen many of the new arrivals as they straggled down the street, making a brave pretense at form but showing their woeful lack of training, and in my heart I pitied them if it was to be their fate to meet Bragg's old and experienced campaigners. They reminded me of nothing so much as the inhabitants of a village suddenly called from their beds in the middle of the night by alarm bells to subdue a threatening conflagration—startled, feverish from excitement, and not knowing what to do, but brave and resolute when the way was once found.

There would, it was plain, be little sleep that night in this city. Horsemen passed me going in one direction or another at furious speed, as though upon missions that would admit of no delay. A murmur of general unrest everywhere filled the air and mingled with more specific sounds that fell upon my ears.

Groups of men and women and clinging children were gathered about the doors of houses, neighbor could be heard calling to neighbor, and from here and there came angry voices and sounds

of quarrels whose overheard phrases showed the cause of contention to be political.

I neared the outskirts of the city without interruption, and coming to a street leading southward between rows of straggling houses toward the open country that could not be far distant, I turned into it, urging my willing horse to a faster pace. I had barely done so when a thick cloud obscured the moon and darkened the way before me, but I pressed on.

Presently the cloud lifted and disclosed a bridge directly before me, and into the added light of a street lamp near its entrance walked a sentry with gun held awkwardly in hand. He called out a challenge, in obedience to which I brought my horse to such a sudden stand—not being yet familiar with his qualities—that he reared dangerously as the bit cut into his tender mouth.

With amazement not unmixed with chagrin, I discovered in the sentry no less a personage than the legionary, Spelker, who had been so quick to recognize me the night before. To meet him again so soon and under such circumstances was an ill fortune of which I had not dreamed. His uniform consisted of an infantry cap and belt, which, along with his gun and cartridge box, constituted the extent of his military accoutrement.

I fancied that he felt ill at ease in his unusual situation, and that he would be happier were he well out of it and back at his horse-buying. My

hat was down far over my face, and as I wore now the long weather coat and was riding a gray horse, whereas my own was a bay, I think he did not at once suspect my identity.

“What do you want?” I demanded of him sternly.

He stepped back a pace, manifesting a nervousness which, as his finger was upon the trigger of a cocked musket, was somewhat disconcerting. When I spoke he seemed to prick up his ears as if in recognition of my voice. As he did not immediately answer my question and I felt that it would be better for him to believe that I was not affecting a disguise, I rode up against the very point of his bayonet and throwing back my hat renewed my demand with confident front.

“So it’s you, is it?” he asked, less heroically than he had accosted me on the highway with a courage then stiffened by liquor and the presence of his fellows, but yet with a dogged obstinacy that boded me no good. “It goes against the grain to let you pass at all, my buck, but if you have the word I suppose I’ll have to. Give the countersign.”

As far as my knowledge went the countersign might be alpha or omega, or anything between, but I could not waste much time in parley, though it would best suit my purpose to make the contrary appear.

“Easy, my friend, easy,” said I, intent upon

beguiling him into lowering the point of his gun. "There is plenty of time. I think you treated me shabbily last night, and in very unneighborly spirit. Had you ever thought that one who suspects quickly may himself be suspected?"

"Well, you've got nothing to complain of. It's me that's got a very pretty bump, and not your head that's cracked," he responded, dropping his musket butt down, that he might have a free hand to rub his contusion. I saw my opportunity, which had come much quicker than I had reason to hope.

"I am sorry," said I, as sympathetically as I could, "that I am compelled to make it a pair," and thereupon flashed my sword quickly above his head and let it descend flat upon the thick top of his cap.

He staggered and fell to the ground, dropping his gun as he did so, and I lost no time in continuing on my way. No sound came from Spelker and if his wits returned in five minutes he would do well; more serious injury he was not likely to suffer.

A little beyond the bridge, at the side of the street—which here was not more than a country road—I had, while talking with Spelker, observed a camp fire about which men were gathered; how many I could not tell. They were no doubt detailed to watch the bridge. Reasoning that as I had passed the sentry they would conclude that I

was entitled to go on, I went ahead at a smart gallop and was not stopped.

Not being at all certain as to my course, but realizing the dangers of that locality, I made haste to leave it and turned into the first intersecting road leading westward. Such houses as were here were mere shanties, and far between, and I knew that in truth I was at the city's limits. Furthermore, I knew that mounted patrols guarded every highway for miles around.

Fires at picket and vidette posts showed dully before me and to the right and to the left. It would have been difficult even for one with a perfect understanding of the country to get through the encircling line without detection, but for me, of necessity going at a venture, how much less my chance. Yet I must take it, and fortune soon favored me.

The night suddenly became intensely dark from quickly risen and threatening clouds which gave promise of a storm. I prayed that the promise might be speedily fulfilled, and drawing aside into a common covered with trees I stopped and waited. A roll of thunder in the southwest confirmed my hopes. The wind arose and began shaking down upon me the dead leaves in a shower and whirling them about. A cloud of dust picked up from the dry highway swept over me, filling my eyes and nostrils and grating in my teeth. Soon the rain came, first in timid, uncer-

tain waves which pattered musically upon the baked leaves, and then in a steady, driving down-pour.

Regaining the road I now put spurs to my horse and keeping far within the circle of lights neared a road running again southward, as I could see in the vivid flashes of the lightning. In the same way I saw a mounted sentry cross it. He was going in the direction opposite to the one I wished to take, with his head pulled down into the collar of his coat and the rim of his rain-soaked hat beaten down upon his cheeks, giving him a woe-begone and far from vigilant appearance. Reaching the cross-road before the soldier turned back upon his beat I turned into it. The way was seemingly a mere dirt road, but little traveled, I judged, already sloppy with water, and not regarded as of much importance—a fact which might benefit me.

A fire that I had at first seen, apparently directly in my path, disappeared under the torrents of rain, and I faced only blackness, pierced at long intervals by the lightning. The noise made by the elements, while deadening the sounds of my approach also made it impossible for me to hear, but I knew that I must be near where the light had been.

Just then my horse swerved slightly to the left, and the sound made by his rapid feet as they struck the ground showed that he was upon the

hard smooth surface of a macadamized highway. The wind was directly in my face and now swept to my ears the voices of men in my front and carried behind me the sounds of my own movements. Believing that I could, unless my presence was revealed by the lightning, now flashing less frequently, come abreast of the men without warning, I urged my horse into a run, determined to take the chances of the way before me, and like a shot sped past the point where I conceived the danger to lie. Through the rushing wind that filled my ears with a roar, came faintly a smothered cry of alarm, a quick and futile command to halt, several shots, and then shouts growing fainter. Checking my horse after awhile I listened but detected no sounds of pursuit.

CHAPTER VII

CAPTAIN BURKLEY'S GENTLEMEN

BY grace of a rare good fortune, little short of accidental, I now found myself in the open country outside of the Federal picket lines. There was only one thing to do and that was to go on, whatsoever might befall, and go on I did. The storm passed over and the sky cleared rapidly. The moon, circling high and bright in the heavens, made objects plain before me save here and there where the turnpike was shadowed by trees or encroaching hills. Not knowing the exact location of Bragg's forces I expected every moment to come upon his outer picket line, for I had no other idea than that he had control of all the approaches to the city. So I was not surprised when, rounding the base of a hill skirted by the turnpike, I came suddenly face to face with a party of mounted men who brought me to a stand with levelled carbines. One of them, riding out a little in front of the others, accosted me:

"Which way, comrade?"

"To General Bragg's army," I returned, believing these to be a part of the investing force.

"And where are you from?"

"Louisville," said I.

"Well," said he, "you won't be likely to reach old Bragg to-night. He's flunked and turned tail for Bardstown. If you are a fighting man steer clear of Bragg."

The information that General Bragg had turned back came as a great surprise to me, and there was so much of anger and disappointment, as well as positive disrespect toward the Confederate commander, in the speaker's tones that for a moment the fear assailed me that I had stumbled upon a Federal scouting party and had been too free in declaring myself. But this suspicion I could hardly credit, as the leader and all of the men that I could see wore the color of the Confederacy.

"And are you not Confederate soldiers?" I asked, to relieve my suspense.

"Oh, we are Johnny Rebs right enough. But we are disgusted, that's all. My hundred men can't take Louisville, much as we should like to, so we are going south, too. Just been taking a little rest. If you like you can ride with me at the head of the column. Come on."

Getting me in front of him he turned his horse and ordered the men in the road, consisting of a half dozen or more, to proceed in advance of us; then gave a command that brought from the shadow of the trees on both sides of the road the

remainder of his company, whom I had not before observed.

Soon we were going southward at a good swinging trot, the leader doing me the honor to ride at my side. It developed that his purpose was to have further conversation with me, and he asked my name and put many other questions, excusing himself on the ground that he must settle in his own mind what to do with me—whether to carry me along as a prisoner or to let me follow my own will. He protested that the latter course would suit him better, as he did not care to bother with prisoners. I think that without being too free about myself I succeeded, at least partially, in satisfying him of my good faith, if not in removing all question as to my character.

He was a talkative man and had a deep-seated grievance against General Bragg, at which he had already hinted, and which, with some other things, he exploited in detail at intervals as we went along. It fell out that the company under his command was an independent one, or a “free troop.”

Aside from some voluntary contributions from friends of the South in Louisville, it furnished its own equipment and subsistence, except where—as was not infrequently the case, I conjectured—they found it convenient to levy tribute. He insisted that they were neither freebooters nor guerrillas, but that under orders from the constituted

authorities they undertook the accomplishment of enterprises believed to be helpful to the South. A species of moss-trooper they might be, he admitted with a laugh, but claimed that they denied themselves the usual pleasures of brigandage while submitting to more than its customary exactions and hazards.

"And yet," he said, angrily, "the Unionist commander of this district ordered that we should be shot if caught, and not held as prisoners. If General Bragg had been quick enough and bold enough he could have driven this vaunting tyrant into the river along with all his rag-tag and bob-tail, and have taught him a lesson in shooting that he would have remembered."

Thus he went on, alternately railing at the Unionist district commander and abusing the Confederate general, bestowing expletives in both directions with an admirable impartiality. Now and again recurring to his own followers, he spoke of them with pride and called them his gentlemen. He seemed delighted to dwell upon the sacrifices that they were making without compensation or hope of reward other than such trifles as incidentally fell to their lot when they had the good luck to cut off a convoy, or were driven by stress of fortune to negotiate loans from the most accessible friend or foe.

I could only dimly make out what manner of man he was in appearance, but otherwise could

form a tolerable estimate of his qualities, and this, aside from the conviction that he was, perhaps, too free of tongue, was not unfavorable.

Two or three hours before daybreak we came up with the scouts, no doubt at a prearranged rendezvous. A halt was called, pickets thrown out and sentries posted, and the men, including the leader himself, were quickly scattered about on the ground sound asleep, except one stationed not far away who was probably detailed to keep his eyes on me. At any rate, he very faithfully did so during the remainder of the night as I can attest, for sleep resolutely refused to visit me.

The camp was not astir until the sun was nearly an hour high, and thirty minutes later we were again ready for the saddle. I could now see the character of the company I was keeping. The leader, who had shared his breakfast with me, was not greatly my senior, and was of prepossessing appearance, with fair hair, a face much tanned by sun and weather, and blue eyes that looked determined but not ungentle. A well proportioned man he was, too, and made a fine figure on horseback.

His followers did not all impress me as having an unquestioned claim to the honorable title that their commander had given them. But if boldness of bearing, a rollicking humor and a proficiency in the use of oaths, to which I may add,

from subsequent observation, good horsemanship and dare-devil spirit, completed the definition of the term, then they were gentlemen, every one.

They gave little heed to me. Most of them seemed not to notice my presence at all. A few of them looked me over casually but maintained a strict and respectful silence as to their impressions. My horse, however, appeared to meet with the unqualified approval of all, judging from the looks that were directed toward him and not from what was said, and he, for his part, acted as if he were very well satisfied with the company he was in.

I had intentionally deferred making inquiries as to the purposes of the captain with respect to myself until by some means I could make sure of my standing, or until he voluntarily revealed them to me. For the time I was contented that I was making some headway with my own plans, which, I felt assured, were in a fair way to be ultimately realized.

Just as we were on the point of taking up our march—only waiting for the return of two men who had been sent scouting in our rear—three horsemen came into view on the crest of the hill behind us. Two of them were the scouts but the other's identity was not disclosed until they drew near, and then, to my great relief and gratification, I recognized Colonel Mandrell, weary and

mud-spattered, and showing other signs of a hard night's journey. As he came up the captain stood out to meet him and friendly greetings were exchanged, proving a previous acquaintance.

"Burkley, I am mighty glad to see you for I have had a regular Tam O'Shanter ride this past night. Have you a flask handy? Thanks—excuse me a moment. There, my boy, that will chase some of the stiffness out of my joints."

Here he looked about him, and his eyes fell upon me, comfortably astride one of his favorite horses.

"Why, Trenham, how are you? How in the world did you get here?"

"Somewhat after your own fashion, I should think," I returned, "and I desire to acknowledge the debt I owe to your horse, which I was compelled to appropriate."

At the suggestion of Colonel Mandrell, who dismounted and stretched himself at his ease on the grass in the warm sunshine, Captain Burkley delayed his departure for an hour, during which time explanations were made to him by my friend that brought an offer of any assistance that he might be able to render.

Not only did the captain show marked respect for the new arrival, but every member of the company seemed to understand that he was a person of importance whose wishes as to their movements were equal to commands. Indeed,

from the moment when Colonel Mandrell had appeared among us Burkley had addressed him more as a superior officer than as a chance guest, and the men gave evidence of similar regard.

At this I wondered a little, but attributed it to nothing more than simple recognition of his high standing as a known and daring friend of the Confederacy. When after a while we were on the Bardstown road and riding in the rear of the column, as he had arranged it, he opened a conversation with me that increased my wonder. First, he had told of his escape from Louisville, which, having received a friendly warning of his contemplated arrest, he had accomplished with difficulty after some hours of concealment in the city. After I had told him about my own adventure I spoke of my desire to join Morgan's cavalry. At this he exclaimed:

"Why did you not tell me of your purpose long ago? Perhaps I could have done something for you." He looked at me for a moment and then added, reflectively: "And perhaps I can yet. I suppose you would be satisfied with anything from trooper up to major-general?"

"Anything," I made answer.

"Well, now, this is serious. Morgan wants men, as I happen to know, and recruiting is being done for him even now in Kentucky. With your training you ought to have a captaincy to begin

with, but that you are not likely to get unless you can take your own company into his camp."

"Which is impossible," said I, "and so I must be satisfied to go into the ranks."

"I don't know that it is impossible," he responded, speaking slowly as if he were turning something over in his mind. "What do you think of those fellows?"—nodding his head toward the men in front of us, who sat in their saddles with a negligent ease that bespoke their horsemanship.

"They look like good material," said I, not at all comprehending his meaning, "and it is a pity they are not in a more regular service."

"I have no doubt that they have served a purpose in their chosen field—in truth, my information enables me to assert positively that they have—but I believe that they can now be dispensed with in that line."

He stopped and again seemed to reflect. After awhile he went on: "Burkley has been a good bushwhacker and has in him the making of a good officer. He is loyal and faithful, but a little too eager and impatient and a trifle reckless. I have heard a good deal about his company, which has been given a variety of unpleasant names, and know that the Federals have been especially anxious to lay violent hands on its commander." He laughed a little in a grim sort of way, adding: "But Burkley has always eluded them most

cleverly. What's the matter with your horse, Trenham?"

That was what I did not know. Since we had started he had been pulling at his bit and giving me trouble to hold him in check.

"Perhaps, Colonel, as he is not really mine, but yours, you can answer your question better than I," said I.

He gave me a keen look and responded: "Have you tried him at the head of the column?"

"That is where I rode last night, and, since you mention it, I remember that he gave me no trouble at all."

"Have you ever considered the strength of habit in both man and beast?" he asked. "We easily, almost unconsciously, fall into the place to which we have accustomed ourselves, and if by chance or design we are crowded into another we are instantly ready for rebellion; the same thing may be true of horses. But I was talking of Burkley. For some time he has been fairly aching to join the artillery service. I think he told me that once, before the war, he belonged to a battery which, when hostilities broke out, went almost unanimously over to the Unionists. If his ambition still leads him in that direction, perhaps, as I said, something can be done for you. Those men there will be happy to join Morgan's

force, and, with Burkley provided for more to his taste elsewhere, they will need a new captain."

I was greatly moved by this manifest evidence of his good will and his desire to help me in a way agreeable to my feelings, but far in excess of my expectations, which had not been extreme. At first I was much perplexed to determine how he might bring about the result which he had suggested, but little by little light broke in upon my understanding and I saw the truth as clearly as if he had himself explicitly narrated it.

The troop was his, maintained and used heretofore for his own purposes, or purposes for which he stood sponsor, and he was its real head and leader at such times as he chose to be so. He was a strong and vigorous man of adventurous spirit—one who delighted in mixing action with craft, and who, for powerful reasons, did not care to be publicly identified with the band of irregulars ostensibly led by Larkin Burkley.

Now, by some shifting of plans, he found it convenient to sever his own connection with the company and let it engage in other service. Whether he had thought of the matter prior to his meeting with me this day was not material, but I was certain that after it had once entered his mind he would work it out for my advantage and accommodation if possible, and with him I felt that it would be possible.

A little before noon we reached Bardstown,

near which place General Bragg's army of forty thousand men was temporarily encamped, and stopped on suitable ground somewhat removed from that occupied by the others.

Not far from us several batteries of field artillery were stationed. They at once caught and held the eyes of Burkley and set him talking at a great rate, showing that his old enthusiasm had in no degree abated. Through the small field glass which he carried at his side he looked the grim monsters over, praising here, criticising there, and withholding judgment elsewhere. He even began to speak in more friendly spirit of the Confederate commander. While in this temper Colonel Mandrell took him apart and held a conversation with him, the purport of which I could only guess. Afterward the two men rode away together, leaving me, as the colonel told me privately, to get on the best terms I could with the men.

As it happened, no better time for the realization of Burkley's ambition could have been seized upon, as General Bragg, by the surrender to him of the Union forces at Munfordsville a few days before, had come into possession of a quantity of cannon, and his chief of artillery was even then engaged in forming new batteries.

The next day Burkley announced to the troop his appointment as lieutenant of artillery. He was popular with the men, and that they regretted his proposed departure from among them was

shown by their sober faces. When he had finished, Colonel Mandrell addressed them and told them that the old days were over, but that a more glorious career awaited them in the service of the South if they availed themselves of their opportunities.

I will not attempt to set down all he said, least of all will I dwell upon the overpraise that he bestowed upon me in urging upon them my fitness to be their captain. But so adroitly did he appeal to them—not forgetting to state that I had not pushed myself forward, and that he alone was responsible for the proposal—that when he called for an expression of their opinions, I was assured of their support and favor. I immediately went about the task of making arrangements to carry the new scheme into execution, and to that end called into consultation with me all who had acted in the capacity of subordinate officers in the troop. These men I found to be happy at the prospect of engaging in a more satisfactory service than that which had previously occupied their time, and they exhibited a willingness to aid me that drove from my mind every lingering doubt as to my welcome among them.

I have thus written of these things, not because they are in themselves interesting or important, but to show how it happened that I acquired rank so quickly without first winning it by hard service. But that I earned it afterward, in following the

standard of the man to whose fortunes I was presently to be attached during the most brilliant period of his career, and near to the time of its unfortunate close, will be admitted, I think, by all of those whose dangers I shared in those wild days.

CHAPTER VIII

WITH THE GREAT RAIDER

THE camp at Bardstown was maintained for several days, and leaving the matter to the management of Colonel Mandrell, I had the satisfaction of seeing my company duly enrolled and accepted into the regular service and assigned to the command of General Morgan. Its members would not have been content to be placed elsewhere, and their enthusiasm and delight knew no bounds when they learned that our project had been successfully accomplished and that they would be soon riding up and down with the great cavalier at their head.

Then there were days of delay and impatience, followed at last by a movement to Harrodsburg, where came our future leader to whose fortunes we were thenceforth committed. I carried to him a personal letter from the man to whom I already owed so great a debt, and it was the circumstance of presenting it that brought me first into the presence of this bold partisan chieftain of whom I had heard so much.

He was at this time probably thirty-five years

old, and there was that about him which at once marked him as a man of distinction. A soldierly presence, in truth, with his six feet of strength and grace still unmarred by the hardships to which he was constantly exposed. His eyes, of a grayish blue, were lively with intelligence and purpose; his features handsome, and his address as pleasing as his manners were gentle and considerate. But above all else there was about him that air of self-reliance, determination and utter fearlessness that characterized his career as a soldier and made him renowned above his fellows for a boldness and daring that, in one less capable, would have approached foolhardiness. This is saying much, for the time which brought forth his activities produced many resolute leaders, North and South, whose deeds have made their names justly conspicuous in the history of their country. Often had my youthful blood been aroused by reading of the glamorous achievements of the first Richard and other heroes of chivalry, but the man I was henceforth to follow was as stout of heart as any of these, though his accomplishments are less famed.

The semi-independence of Morgan's command and the opportunities which it afforded for adventurous service attracted to him the daring from all walks of life, and in his ranks the educated sons of the high and wealthy rode stirrup to stirrup with the illiterate and lowly.

That all those who flocked to his standard were impelled thereto by patriotism I do not believe. Many were no doubt moved by a love of adventure and a reckless desire to gratify it; but this I do affirm, that however it chanced that a man found himself under the authority of this courageous leader, he was held in fealty by a love of the man himself. For he won men's hearts with singular ease, and at his word they would fight and dare and die, more, I believe, for him than for the cause which he represented.

He received me at his headquarters in a most kindly manner that at once put me at my ease. I looked to see him worn by the tremendous strain of a recently finished campaign in which in a little over twenty days he had, to the amazement of the whole country, successfully covered more than a thousand perilous miles, everywhere beset by his enemies. But of this there was no indication, and his freshness and elasticity of bearing gave proof of his wonderful powers of endurance. This man, always eager and resourceful, even to the pitiful end, never ceased to be a marvel to me.

After he had inquired concerning Colonel Mandrell he questioned me a little about myself and my men, but assured me—tapping the letter with his finger—that he had no misgivings about either since reading that. The interview was not prolonged, as a summons came while I was present calling him into council with General Bragg, but

as I left he promised that he would in person speedily inspect my troop. This he did the next day, and from that time forth there was not a man among them all who was not willing to follow him to the ends of the earth.

Scant time for rest was ever allowed this sleepless warrior, and he was soon in the field again, my gallant gentlemen bearing him company. How well they rode, and how well they fought, and how bravely many of them died before that last headlong raid northward, need not be told.

Summer was in full tide again, when, with three thousand horsemen and a battery of six guns, our faces were turned toward the Ohio. There were many conjectures as to our destination and object, but aside from the General himself, none knew and none questioned. Here and there as we progressed small forces of the enemy fell upon our flanks or snapped at our heels. These were brushed aside or driven back. On every side indications grew that the Federals, aware of our movement, and knowing the intrepid character of our General, were hastening the concentration of a sufficient force to bar his way and thwart his purpose.

Whatever the nature of his mission, it soon became evident that he was resolved to elude his foes when he could, and only fight them when they got in his way. And this was often enough, God knows, as not a day passed in which the

charge was not sounded that sent some of his men full drive against obstinate Federal guns, and stretched many of our brave fellows on the ground not to rise again; among these last was the General's own young brother, a lad loved by all. Nor did I escape my share of the fighting, for it had long since come to be known that the once irregulars never stood back where any dared go forward.

One day my company was detached from the main command with instructions to feel the country to the east of our route and rejoin the column the next day at Bardstown, which was for the second time to be conspicuous in my itinerary. After nightfall we had, on information obtained from a friendly citizen, surprised and captured the Federal Colonel Crespy at the moment when he was enjoying a much relished dinner at the house of a Unionist situated on the outskirts of a town in which his regiment of cavalry had been halted for the night.

His escort, which he had left on guard about the premises, had unfortunately escaped into the town, thus making it necessary for us to hasten from the locality unless we cared to measure our strength against vastly superior numbers. Guided by the same citizen we had ridden far into the night, bearing gradually toward the place of the morrow's rendezvous. It lacked only a few hours of daylight when I considered it safe to stop and

dispose my weary but uncomplaining troopers for a little rest. As for myself, I had barely touched the ground before I was sound asleep.

My next conscious sensation was one of being shaken violently, and the shaking, as I have always since believed, was supplemented by a kick, still more potential in opening my heavy eyes. Aroused and startled, and not a little ruffled by the latter indignity—though I quieted my feelings by thinking that it was not intended as such, but born of the fancied urgency of the situation—I jumped to my feet, thoroughly awake, to find that every man was up and standing to horse in the early morning sun ready to take my commands. Before me stood Neffitt, the corporal of the guard, a good soldier, but a wild fellow with little reverence for rank save in his obedience to orders. He saluted, but I detected a mischievous twinkle in his eyes which confirmed my suspicion as to his manner of getting me up.

“What’s the trouble?” I demanded sharply, showing my disapproval.

“The enemy, coming over the hill,” he said, saluting again, this time more seriously and pointing toward the east.

Looking that way I saw a group of bluecoated horsemen coming down the decline. Without a doubt they were the advance guard of Crespy’s cavalry, now close on our heels. My men occupied an elevated position in an open wood a little

off the road, but near the edge of the wood there was enough underbrush to make it unlikely that we had been yet observed. The hill was nearly a mile away, and between us stretched level ground only broken on the south of the road by a long ridge.

I determined to wait and make sure as to the numbers of the Federals. Colonel Crespy himself stood near, outwardly calm and unmoved, but in his eyes there was unmistakable trace of inward excitement. The moment was an anxious one, not less for him than for us all. At close quarters my men, numbering less than one hundred, would have small chance against my prisoner's whole regiment of eight hundred which I believed to be coming upon me.

I was resolved not to risk the hazards of a combat if my surmises as to the strength of my opponents proved to be correct. Of this fact I was not long in doubt, for presently the head of a column appeared on the hill top, and I was on the point of ordering my men into the road for a race when my eyes fell upon a sight that caused me to withhold the command.

About one-third of the distance between my position and the Federals was a road, which, coming from the north, crossed the other at right angles and disappeared into a small wooded valley two or three hundred yards or so beyond. The elevation constituting the eastern slope of

the little valley extended farther toward the crossing of the roads than did the western, thus allowing us to see persons traveling the valley road northward before they became visible to our enemy.

Emerging upon this road were horsemen in gray clothes going at a smart trot. My glass showed them to belong to Morgan's command, but how many of them I could not yet tell, as the General had a habit of dividing his force in sweeping through the enemy's country and reuniting it at points agreed upon, always being in personal command of the column with which he rode.

Before I could possibly have given warning to my comrades of the near presence of the Federals, the advance guards of the forces were face to face. Unslinging their carbines they fired and fell back, while the main column of Federals broke into a gallop, and at the same time file upon file of gray coats came charging up from the southward.

Without waiting to see more, I detached two men to guard Colonel Crespy, whose cheeks were now aflush with feeling, and placing myself at the head of my eager men shouted a command that took us into the highway and started us flying forward.

The Confederate leader was, I saw with keen

satisfaction, Morgan himself, and he appeared to take in the situation in which he was placed at a glance. A quick maneuvering of his force showed that he was preparing for a struggle; and it was the kind of a fight that he liked, in the open, with plenty of room for men and horses.

The Federals, on their part, did not wait to see whether the enemy fronting them consisted of a few or many, but came onward with great dash and courage, deploying a column to the right and to the left with incredible rapidity and skill. It seemed to me at the moment—though I had little time to study the strategical qualities of the field—that the lay of the ground was favorable to the Confederates, and so it should have been, seeing that our General's following was made up of only four or five troops and was not much better than a scouting party. The elevation to the east, which extended well out toward the highway, protected them in a measure against attack on the flank, I thought, thus giving them an opportunity to strike the enemy's center to greater advantage, with little to fear from a counter side blow.

That was the way it looked to me, but the General took no chances. Deploying his whole force quickly well back in the field beyond the angle of the roads, he arranged it so that he could get headway from whatever direction he was likely to be assailed. It was well that he did, for presently, almost abreast of their comrades on the

low ground and in the highway, there came a rush of horse over the brow of the ridge. The roads were only unimproved ways worn by travel across the unfenced ground, and furnished no obstruction to the movements of the cavalry.

It was my intention to take care of that part of the enemy—which did not greatly outnumber my command—to the north of the main road and prevent them from falling upon the General's flank. To that end I swerved to the left, straightened out in column of eights, then dashed at speed toward the noses of their horses.

Before reaching them I took a glance at the other part of the field and saw that every shod hoof was in motion and beating the earth in unison with its fellows to the right and to the left, before and behind. The General was a good hundred yards ahead of me, and almost upon the foe who had been compelled to turn slightly to face him. A hundred feet—fifty! God! how my blood tingled and how my muscles drew under the double strain—often as similar scenes had spread before my eyes—until I felt that I was being fairly pulled from my saddle. And then the combatants crashed into each other's very teeth.

I caught a glimpse of rearing horses and flashing sabers, and heard the rattle of revolver shots and the shouts of the fighters. It was only a glimpse, for in a moment I was myself striking

out lustily, and about me was a confusion of blue and gray coats, a struggling mass of speaking and dumb animals, a clashing of metal, and hoarse words of defiance.

Just as I began to feel that I was safely through our adversary's line, my horse stumbled beneath me and went down in spite of my efforts to get it to its feet, and over and around me flashed the trampling heels of my followers' horses as they thundered by with rattling scabbards and clanking harness. It was one of the fortunes of war and I expected to be crushed where I lay, but they passed by leaving me untouched.

I had risen to my feet when a bearded young Federal officer, wearing the straps of a lieutenant, who had been unhorsed in the charge, came running up and with drawn sword demanded my surrender. My own blade was still in my hand, and presenting it I demanded that he himself should yield. Instantly we were fighting as though the issue of the battle depended upon the strength of our arms. Presently my opponent, who had exhibited a skill not anticipated by me, called out my name in a loud tone of surprise and withheld his hand. Taking it that he desired to yield, although he was far from being overcome, and being surprised that he knew me, I also withheld my hand.

Before either had time to speak a horseman dashed up and aimed a blow at the officer with

his saber. I thrust out my sword just in time to turn the weapon aside, and looking up saw that it was my unceremonious corporal. Without waiting to hear the rebuke that was rolling hot from my lips, he jumped down, and, with a salute, exclaimed:

"They are forming for the return charge; take my horse, sir," and then the rascal, pushing the rein into my hand, scampered off after a loose animal that was standing, bewildered and snorting, a little distance away.

"Thank you, Captain Trenham. My beard has grown, but your old friend, Paul Venault, salutes you."

With that he started after the corporal, for the horse was no doubt his. My astonishment was so great that I could not utter a word, nor indeed did I have time, for, as the corporal had said, my men had checked up a couple of hundred yards further on and had already faced about.

Spurring toward them I looked to see how our comrades were faring south of the road, and saw the tall form of the General at the head of his column ready for another blow. And while I watched, that column started back, compact and steady, and like a human wedge it drove itself into and through the line of the enemy. At the very front, as the keen edge of the wedge, rode the General himself as it plunged into the moving

mass of blue and cleft its way where resistance seemed the most determined.

On rejoining my men I looked back to see what my late opponents were doing, and observed that they seemed to be in doubt as to their further course. While they wavered it occurred to me to get into the greater fight where I thought I saw a chance to achieve a more conclusive result. Scarce a hundred yards lay between my present position and the main body of the enemy, now already in confusion, and I had it in mind to follow my General. But this we were not allowed to do, for our opponents suddenly started toward us like mad.

So, giving the command, we set out to meet them in a final struggle for the mastery. Gathering quick speed, with sabers gripped firmly and feet well stirrured for the shock, we went hammering back over the green turf. Cheers broke from the throats of Burkley's gentlemen as we struck the foe, hesitated, then grappled for an instant, while the morning sun glinted from rising and falling blades.

A participant sees few things clearly in a charge of cavalry against cavalry. It means action, motion, set jaws, flaming eyes, the curses of the reckless, and uproar indescribable. So it was in this fierce onset, now so stubbornly resisted. A glancing blow upon the shoulder nearly unseated me once, but the charge wore itself out at last and

the contestants tore themselves apart piecemeal and roared onward like a rock-broken torrent.

Many riderless horses galloped about the field, confused, and with heads held high in frightened liberty. A noble bay which went neighing by near me bore such a striking resemblance to the animal I had been compelled to abandon at Louisville that I shouted its name, whereat it stopped suddenly as if in doubt. Again I called and it came bounding to my side and followed me along. Its superior trappings showed that it had been ridden by an officer. Turning in my saddle I saw that the Federals were withdrawing, for the time seemingly demoralized, and I wondered if the result would have been different had the gallant Crespy been at their head, and thought of the pain in his soldier heart as he watched the fight going against them.

But this was not all that I saw. Across the field on foot came my corporal bearing along with him as a prisoner the luckless Venault, who was limping dreadfully and looked chagrined and dispirited. I learned afterward that in running after the corporal he had become entangled with his scabbard and fallen, wrenching his knee and breaking his sword. He had then become the easy victim of his foe, who thenceforward devoted his time to bringing him into our lines.

Venault's misfortune upset him sadly, and the humiliation of it seemed to grind him more

than his injury, though the agony caused by the wrenched ligaments must have been very great. He had been in the Federal army almost a year, he told me. His restless spirit craved excitement, and, as his own country was at peace, he had followed the example of the Count of Paris and come to America. Enlisting the good offices of the French minister, he got a commission after a time, and had seen a good deal of hard service.

"Well done, Captain Trenham," called out the General, as I neared the spot where he was resting his panting horses. "That finished them, I think, but I believe we had better not tie ourselves here."

Praise from the General was always generous when deserved, and strengthened the attachment of his followers. But it was never recklessly bestowed, and there was honest striving for his approval. It was not the first time that good fortune had brought me to his attention and elicited commendation. Our good services had been pledged in advance and we had felt obliged on every occasion to do our best, which, I may assert, we would have done had no pledge been given.

After a few minutes our march was resumed on the westward road, and we picked up my two men and Colonel Crespy on the way. An hour's travel brought us to the Bardstown turnpike, and about eleven o'clock we appeared before that town to

find that a small force there was hotly resisting the entrance of our comrades who had arrived on the evening before. The General was informed of the situation; how the Federals, consisting, as we afterward learned, of a single troop, stationed in a building commanding the principal street, had held off a portion of his command for the better part of a day, were still unconquered and stubbornly refused to surrender. Then it was that, for the first and last time, I saw our leader furious with anger and impatience.

"Great God! sir," he exclaimed to the senior officer, who had all forenoon worried over the problem of how to dislodge the foe without yet being able to solve it, "do you mean to spend the summer here? We shall have all the Unionists in the Kentucky department about our ears at this rate. Get your guns in position, send another flag and then if they do not surrender shell them out. It is well enough to be brave, but they need not be fools."

After that the affair came to an end as quickly as could be desired even by the General himself, for when the little band of defenders saw that cannon were trained upon their improvised fortress at a range that would tear the building to pieces and them along with it they laid down their arms and came out. The General, his wrath appeased, complimented their courage and let them go upon their paroles, releasing at the same time and in

the same way Colonel Crespy and my friend Paul. I never saw the latter afterward, but in that dreadful war between his own country and Prussia a few years later he was a colonel of hussars, and was killed while leading a charge at Gravelotte.

We had enough to bother us without carrying along a lot of prisoners to hamper our movements. Our scouts were constantly bringing in reports of the tremendous activities of the Federals, whom Morgan was doing all in his power to mislead. For that purpose he had heretofore divided his force, and for that purpose, also, he had, through his private operator, tapped the telegraph wires in secluded places, and intercepted the enemy's messages, thus learning many of the things that were being proposed and done to circumvent him. And there are grave reasons for doubting the authenticity as well as the accuracy of answers to some of these messages that were sent flying back to the Unionist headquarters.

There may be those who do not admit the justness of strategy such as this. But in the matter of military diplomacy I have always observed that the principal thing is to win, and that one who is determined to follow strictly moral and straightforward lines in all relations has no business at the head of an army situated as ours was.

Not a man among us doubted the ability of our General to extricate himself from the difficulties that were being thrown around him. The

word had been given, as we all knew, that his command should be pursued to the last ditch and destroyed. But he had hitherto avoided so many traps and fought his way through so much opposition that his men had come to believe in his invincibility, and were eager to follow him anywhere. That he believed thus strongly in himself I will not affirm, but I do declare the fact—for fact it is—that he was undaunted to the end.

CHAPTER IX

ON BRANDENBURG HEIGHTS

ON the morning of the second day after this, the date being the 8th of July, 1863, the General's combined force reached the small town of Brandenburg, situated on the Kentucky shore of the Ohio river.

We had been without knowledge as to our destination, our duty being only to follow and obey. It was rumored among the men—who sometimes guessed closely to the truth—and believed by some of the officers, that General Morgan had set out to accomplish at Louisville a part of what General Bragg had failed to do in the previous year. There was talk that the city was poorly garrisoned, which, if true, was no doubt because it was not thought that any Confederate commander would be so audacious as to undertake its seizure. To do so, it would be necessary to traverse more than two hundred miles of country then in possession of the Unionists.

But if that had really been our General's object—as I am now certain that it was not, whatever his orders may have been from his superiors—he had at least temporarily abandoned it, for we had

borne off to the westward, and were now more than two score miles below that city. There were not wanting among the officers some who believed that he was following a plan of his own. Just what it was had caused a great deal of conjecture, since the original surmises had to be discarded.

All knew that the armies of Bragg and Buckner were dangerously beset by the Federal forces, which were gradually tightening the lines about them, and that unless these lines could be loosened by some astounding diversion they were likely to be speedily overwhelmed. If that were actually the General's purpose, it had been successful thus far, as important bodies of soldiery had been withdrawn from other affairs and set upon our track.

We had ridden like the wind for two weeks, every day of which we had been compelled either to dodge or fight as best suited the mood of our commander, for he could be as discreet as any when he chose, and also as rash as any. I have said before that he eluded the enemy when he could, but it must not be understood that he ever relinquished a path that he seriously desired to pursue without a contest for the right of way.

And now Brandenburg, with the Ohio river in a fog at our feet! Are we to turn back or go on? If to go on, what is there for us beyond the fog?

We are to cross, so the order has been given.

To that end the troops of Captains Taylor and Merriwether had been sent pellmell in advance of us the day previous to look after ferriage. By good fortune two large steamboats had fallen easily into their hands and these were now at the wharf ready to carry us over.

We had been in the saddle since midnight, with only a few hours' rest before, but these were iron men and they showed little sign of weariness. They laughed and seemed happy. Most of them were young and full of the fire and daring of youth, fit followers for such a leader. No enterprise to which he could put his hand would be too desperate to suit them, and the more reckless it seemed that much more was it likely to stir their enthusiasm and entice them onward. They asked only to know his will.

As they looked down from the heights to the river and across it toward the Indiana border, now faintly visible through the slowly lifting fog, they were filled with an almost childish joy and eagerness. In truth it was a fair and rich field, unswept by war. No hostile army had trod its soil or disturbed the tranquillity of its inhabitants.

The General, sitting his horse a little way off, did not appear to be less sanguine and eager than his men. What thoughts were in his mind as he looked at that inviting shore line through the dissolving mist? Did he think of easy conquest or of the amazing sensation that he was about to

cause? A smile rested upon his strong, sun-bronzed face as he watched his men making ready for a journey that was destined to try their very souls. While he paused thus, now and then exchanging words with Colonel Duke, a shrewd officer for whom he had the highest regard, and who just now did not seem to be in a very good humor, a man walked up and saluted.

"Why, it is Captain Hines," exclaimed Duke.

"So it is," said the General, "and I am glad to see you, Captain. Where is your company?"

"Here," said the officer—though at that moment he looked little like one—striking himself on the breast, a grim smile playing about his resolute mouth.

"But your men, sir," persisted the General.

"There," returned the captain, pointing toward the river and then at the green shore beyond. "Some of them were captured and some of them were drowned, like the brave fellows they were, in trying to get out of that hornet's nest. I report for duty, General. My experience over there has not been to my liking, but I am ready to go back."

The commander's face clouded. "It will do no good to complain of the loss of so many good men, even though they are needed badly," he said, with a motion of his hand as if he were throwing the whole matter aside, "but I do not understand how you happened to be there."

"I was given permission to operate north of the Cumberland, General."

"So you were; but heavens, man, did you construe your orders to authorize you to invade a hostile state with your single troop? The next time I send a corporal out with a squad I shall expect to hear of him marching on to Washington with a demand for its surrender in his mouth ready framed. But never mind, Hines; you are a man after my own heart, and gave them a merry dance, I'll be bound."

"Indeed I did, sir, and they gave me a merrier. I thought I might be able to stir up the copperheads, but the legionaries allowed me no time for any such diplomatic diversion."

They moved away presently, the General and Colonel Duke going down to the landing while Captain Hines started off to look up the quartermaster to whom he was directed to report his need of equipment. The latter stopped long enough by my side to give me a shake of the hand and to hear my hearty expression of satisfaction at his personal safety, then went on, waving his hand right and left in salutation and exchanging greetings with his comrades.

For this man was as chivalrous a soul as ever bestrode a horse, and the ill-success of his bit of knight-errantry was not counted against him when it became known how gallantly he had borne himself. With the enemy in overwhelming num-

bers pressing upon him he had taken to the water, and with a remnant of his company had succeeded in reaching an island. Beyond this the channel was swift and deep and was patrolled by a gunboat that inflicted great damage. Yet he boldly plunged in, and with two men out of the sixty who had followed him got safely to the more friendly southern shore, where he became separated from the others and by mere chance was enabled to rejoin our forces at the moment of our embarkation for the scene of his disaster.

Probably I alone of all the adventurous band about me—so eager to reach the coveted land and so careless of the consequences of a project so daring—looked with dismay and regret upon the prospect that confronted us. I drew a little apart from the others while awaiting orders, but did not dismount, and gazed northward with a heavy heart. Less than a score of miles away, over the green hills, I saw, in my fancy, a little valley in which were two houses that held those who were dearest to me in life—my mother, and that other one, who, though neither kith nor kin, still filled my soul.

It was months since I had last looked upon that peaceful scene—months of danger, of foray and battle, of victory and defeat, of wild charges and precipitate retreats. I had become, to all outward seeming, much as the other men, reveling in peril

and dare-devil divertisement, yet often in the thick of conflict staying my uplifted sword as there would flash before my mental vision the fair face and appealing eyes of her who, I felt sure, desired my welfare but prayed for the defeat of my cause. Not that I shirked my duty as I had undertaken to perform it—God forbid that my manhood should be open to a suspicion so recreant!—but at such times, in spite of myself, my will would fail and my muscles lose their tension. And even now I would have turned back these invaders had the power been mine and breasted them against the thousands thundering behind us. But I could neither do that nor withdraw myself from participation in the raid.

So much for a sentiment which I am not ashamed to avow, and if it be considered evidence of weakness, then I was weak. I am not criticising any one, General Morgan least of all. This was war and he was a soldier, and none more gallant ever lived, to my mind. The Northland was not more sacred than the not less fair fields of the South. And this man, called marauder, guerrilla and bandit by the hasty and inconsiderate, after all pursued his ill-starred way with a moderation that gave the lie to his accusers and marked him a knightly cavalier.

While I remained thus, burdened with my reflections, a man, who, judging from his dress, was neither officer nor private, came toward me

on foot. He was in appearance near thirty years of age, fair and little weather-stained, in the latter respect contrasting strongly with the rough riders through whom he had made his way. He was of good figure and handsome features, but bore a countenance unmistakably sinister in its expression. A certain sort of courage seemed to shine from his light blue eyes, yet there was something unsteady and shifting in the manner of his gaze that seemed to give warning of insincerity, if not of downright treachery. I did not particularly note these things at the time, for I barely observed him until he spoke.

"Well, Captain Trenham, what do you think of the prospect?" he said familiarly, a disagreeable smile curling his lips.

I turned my head and looked at him fairly; looked, but did not answer at once, for I could not recognize in my questioner an acquaintance, or in truth one that I had seen before. When I did speak, it was to say sharply—for the manner of his interruption nettled me:

"You have my name, sir, but I have not yours."

"A name is of little consequence these days, and sits lightly on many men," he returned, unruffled. "I am not always particular as to my own, but since you suggest it, I give the name of Dallas Vawter, which, as it happens, is the one that my parents gave to me."

"And why is my opinion important to you, Mr. Vawter? Why don't you question the General as to what he thinks?" I asked with scant courtesy. I felt an instinctive dislike of this stranger, who, for some cause, had picked me out as a target for his tongue.

"You are abrupt, Mr. Captain, but I do not mind answering your query if you are not disposed to answer mine," Vawter said with a sneer. "As you formerly lived in the neighborhood of Corydon, which place no doubt you will presently see, I thought that you might be peculiarly interested."

"You seem to have put yourself out to learn my history, sir," I responded, my curiosity awakening in spite of me, for I had entered the service of the South as from Virginia, and so far as I was aware not a man, from the General down, knew that I had ever resided elsewhere.

"Not at all, I assure you, Captain," he said with an irritating half laugh intended to discomfort me, for he was quick enough to see that he had made an impression and meant to strengthen it. "I have recently been a resident of that delightful locality and heard somewhat of one John Trenham who went off to join the rebels. So keen was he to show his prowess that he engaged a party of the legionaries on the highway before he had fairly warmed his saddle. Oh, it was no trouble to hear of you if one were inclined

to listen. You will be received with befitting hospitality if by chance they learn that you are with General Morgan. If you were a stranger like these others you would fare better, I think."

"If you are a resident of Corydon, how does it come that you are here?" I inquired suspiciously, overlooking his offensive tone.

"I might retort by putting the same interrogatory to you, but I will not. A residence is like a name—it may be changed as one's convenience or necessities demands. Your General has done me the honor to accept my services in a capacity that may be useful to him in the first stages of his expedition. I joined you at Garnettsville last night. I am a man of peace, you understand," he went on with a leer, "but I do not object to doing a little thing like this for my friends. I am a Kentuckian, like most of these sturdy fellows about us, but not given to turmoil, so I moved across the river. It is more quiet over there."

"To be plain about it," said I, bluntly, "it is your trade to betray and not to fight."

His face reddened and he flashed upward an ugly look. "That is putting the case rather baldly, sir," he cried, with heat, moving a step or two further away; "but you yourself have heard that all is fair in love and war, and I now desire a slight taste of the latter since I have so lately succeeded in the other field; and I pledge you my

word that the fair Kate Bellray is well worth the winning, rank Unionist though she is."

With one bound of my horse I was by his side, and leaning over the saddle horn I seized him by the collar.

"Scoundrel!" said I, fiercely, not accustomed to being played with, and believing that the man was lying in his teeth. "Speak that lady's name again in my presence and I will wring your slanderous neck," and I flung him from me with such violence that he was sent rolling upon the ground.

He got up white with passion. "Oho! I was not mistaken in guessing which way the wind blows with you," he cried, glaring at me wickedly. "May the devil be a saint if I don't make you pay dearly for this pleasantry of yours, Master Trenham!"

And then muttering to himself in his fury he turned and walked toward the river, brushing the dust from his clothes and feeling of his bruised neck as he went. No time was allowed me to entertain disquieting thoughts concerning this man who had taken such pains to hunt me out and make himself obnoxious—getting the worst of the transaction, however, as I viewed it. A serious present business now claimed my attention.

"Boom!" The fog had already cleared away and on the far side of the river—here more than half a mile wide—rose a great puff of white

smoke. It was the challenge of the legionaries. Instantly afterward the men on one of the steamers began to disembark hurriedly. A solid shot had carried away part of the vessel's smokestack.

"Boom!" There was another puff of smoke on the Indiana shore, and another shot caused a hasty evacuation of the wharf. A third and a fourth followed, and the cavalry then on the river front fell further back, laughing and chattering among themselves with an abandon that showed how little they recked of danger.

Presently from the Brandenburg heights there was a flash and a roar, as our guns answered the seemingly solitary but audacious cannon opposite. Another discharge, and then the little force of rural artillerymen who had sought to sweep back the tide of invasion was seen to withdraw quickly into the interior, whereupon the commander of the battery turned his attention to a company of legionaries that had been posted along the bank to resist our passage, and soon sent them flying after their artillery.

The way now being open, a part of the troops, leaving their horses behind, were sent across the river to prevent further interruptions from the shore.

But we were not to be allowed to effect a passage until a new and greater difficulty was overcome. Hardly had the detachment accomplished a landing when a Federal gunboat came rapidly

down the river and began firing with all its might and main, first at the enemy on one side and then at the force on the other. The guns on the heights answered shot for shot. The duel continued for an hour, when the boat withdrew from the unavailing combat and steamed away again as quickly as it had come.

The work of crossing was resumed with all haste, but before it was finished the gunboat reappeared with two transports loaded with troops and mounting guns. Again there was much fruitless cannonading and again did the foe depart, leaving us to our devices. The transferring of all the remaining men and horses was carried on without further hindrance.

By six o'clock in the evening the last man and the last gun had left the Kentucky shore, and the vessels that had so well served our purpose were destroyed in order that they might not perform a like duty for the army that was pursuing us with grim and unflagging determination, as our General very well knew.

Marching a few miles inland, orders were given to encamp for the night. On all sides the frightened inhabitants had fled from their homes, taking refuge in such places of concealment as they could find as if they held us to be common cut-throats; and indeed I have no doubt that many of them did honestly so hold us, seeing that the character of these valorous men had been

grossly misunderstood and defamed. That there were appropriations of private property for which our General was unable to make adequate recompense, I can not deny; but it will now be admitted, even by those who were then his opposers, that, having the power to do so much, the fact that he did so little that was unjustified by the rules of war, proves that he essayed to limit his purveyors as far as he was able to the necessities of his command.

The war-beaten districts to which we had been accustomed were desert wastes compared with the untouched country into which we had now come, and the abundance surrounding them, added to the knowledge that they were in the enemy's country, sufficed to persuade many of our thoughtless fellows to regard looting for sustenance as a virtue. Thus it happened that undefended household stores fell as easy and much-relished spoils into their hands; thence speedily into their not over-filled stomachs.

It was yet early in the night—probably an hour after darkness had fallen—when an orderly from headquarters brought to me a message commanding my presence before the General. I went at once and found him alone, busy with a map that was spread out before him. As I entered he looked up, then, seeing who it was, said without any preliminaries:

"Captain Trenham, I am told that you are familiar with this country."

"Not familiar with it, sir, but somewhat acquainted with it," I responded, knowing well the source of his information.

"How does it happen that you have not yourself told me of the fact of your former residence here?" he asked, but not unkindly.

"I leave you to judge if my silence has affected my qualities as a soldier," said I. "Not until this morning did I certainly know you were coming here, and since then I have had no convenient opportunity, though I should have told you this night in any event."

"I know your worth and appreciate your services, Captain Trenham, but it is possible that you might have given me information that would have aided my plans had I known. However, it is time enough. I have been told by one Vawter—"

"Pardon me, sir, but the man is plainly a rascal," said I, unable to restrain my tongue, which ordinarily was discreet enough.

The General laughed. "No doubt he is all that and more; but he tells me that you have a much better knowledge of this country than he has and that is why I have sent for you. Tremendous efforts will be made to capture or kill us—and at all hazards to prevent my command from recrossing the Ohio. The dice are thrown;

we are in the enemy's country, with no hope of support from the South, and must depend upon our own resources. And I say to you, Captain, that I am resolved to give them a lively chase. We can scatter the legionaries and homeguards like so much chaff, but we will have more than these untasseled cornstalks to contend with before many days have gone by. Therefore I must know all I can, and shall look to you for such information respecting my situation as you can give."

"Such as an honorable soldier may give, who, by the fortunes of war, finds himself treading as an enemy the soil in which his father is buried, is at your service, General," said I, feeling safe in making the statement, for I did not believe that he would ask more of me than this.

"I think I understand you," he said quickly, smiling, for my language must have sounded to him a trifle grandiloquent. "I shall not expect you to be either guide or spy in your own bailiwick, as Colonel Duke would say in his lawyer's flummery. What I want to know is not which road to take but whether we have any friends among the inhabitants."

"I believe that there are many who, if not friends, are at least not enemies, but I have no recent knowledge of them, and, I fear, can not much enlighten you," I returned, with a suspicion that he knew a great deal more of the matter than I.

"I have been told," the General resumed, after a moment of silence, "that there is a certain organization widespread throughout this State whose members are friendly to the South. It has been said—and even promised by some in authority, or at least claiming authority in the organization—that these men would rally to the assistance of any considerable Confederate force that should cross the Ohio. Now, my force is not large, but it is respectable and capable of giving an account of itself. Its presence here is unexpected by these people and is actually due to a plan which, if long premeditated, was somewhat suddenly resolved upon. So, perhaps we shall not find them ready. Hines, of course, did not know that I was coming here, and besides, he claims that he was kept so busy with his military somersaults which finally landed him in the river that he had time for nothing else."

Then I thought of Roger Bellray and of things he had talked about. Beyond that I knew little and could only give the result of the inferences that I had drawn.

"Doubtless there is an organization," I said, "but I do not believe that its members will aid you actively, if at all. Possibly there are some among them who sympathize with our cause, and these might be disposed, if the necessity should come and the opportunity offer, to help us get out of this country. We can not hope for

aid beyond that. These malcontents, as I have heard, are mostly men who look upon the war as fratricidal and unjustified. Outside of a few of the leaders in the movement they are content to be let alone by both sides. If they fight at all it will be against us rather than with us. And, if you will pardon me, I fear the effect upon them if they are given cause to consider us freebooters."

"You are free of speech, Captain," returned the General, laughing; "but you have been a bold soldier and we will not quarrel over trifles, for in war this thing of which you speak is a trifle. We have many times in a pinch enforced assistance from our friends, and there is no reason why we should not compel it from our enemies, who seem, by the way, to be bountifully supplied. Three thousand hungry cavalrymen in a strange country, with no provision train following, are not expected to observe strictly the distinction between mine and thine, as Colonel Duke observed a while ago. Now, as to these other people—these knights of something or other—it is really no great matter after all, as I have not depended upon them in the least. I shall consider what you have said, and may consult you further. Good-night."

Thus dismissing me and the subject he turned again to his map, pulling at his heavy mustache. Accustomed to trust to his own resources, with

unshaken confidence in his troopers and in his own ability to overcome or evade any obstacle, his face was as serene as if he had at his back an army of a hundred thousand instead of a mere handful. He knew the metal of his men and laughed at the storm his presence would provoke. That storm, alas, rose quickly and was more violent than this bold spirit dreamed it would be.

I was not quite ready to take my leave, however, as I had a request to prefer. So, in a few words, I told him about my mother and how it came that she was there, and asked permission to leave the camp for a few hours to visit her. He was tracing a line on the map with a pencil and did not, apparently, give heed to what I was saying until he had made a heavy cross on the paper. Then he looked up quickly and said:

"So your mother lives hereabouts? Well, God forbid that I should prevent your seeing her. How far is it?"

"A distance of ten or twelve miles."

"Look out for the legionary fellows and don't scare them off; we shall want some amusement to-morrow," he said, jocularly.

Then taking up a piece of paper he wrote and signed a leave of absence until four o'clock in the morning. After receiving this writing from his hand another matter that had been painfully in my mind at times during the day recurred to me. I hesitated to mention it, but making a supreme

effort it at last came out, while I felt my face grow hot and flushed with my embarrassment.

"General, you know whether or not I have ever shirked any duty or danger since I have been a member of your command?"

"What now, Captain," the great raider exclaimed, in wonder. "I bear willing witness that you have been a true soldier and have even exceeded the high anticipations of our friend Mandrell."

"Place me in the rear of the column to-morrow. Let the hands of others who are wholly strangers to these people be lifted against them. I bear them no grudge; many of them have befriended those who are dear to me, and my heart fails me here."

"I respect your feelings," the General responded, considerately, "and it shall be as you wish. Furthermore, I will guarantee special protection to any for whom you may desire it. But I do not intend to fight these citizens unless they make me."

With this he bade me good night again, and I returned to my quarters to make ready for my journey. How different was this home coming from that other one! Then I came alone and openly; now I returned with a hostile army and must slip into my mother's presence past watchful foes like a thief in the night. Again I was asking myself how should I find her—and that

other one. I had not written nor had they, but once or twice we had heard indirectly of each other. A strangely uncomfortable feeling possessed me. Surely, as I had told the General, my heart was failing me in this unusual situation.

CHAPTER X

HER BROTHER'S ACCUSER

OTHER things had happened on the fateful July day that witnessed our crossing of the Ohio. At noonday the wide, two-storied house of Roger Bellray held the attention of a small company of mounted men just then approaching the foot of the lane leading to the house.

To the dust-soiled travelers who fixed their hot eyes upon it as its white surface shimmered through the trees, it must have looked cool and inviting. For so well was it shaded by the surrounding maples and elms that the broiling sun could only reach it momentarily here and there as the leaves shifted in the light breeze. Arriving at the entrance to the lane, a man riding in advance of the others, and who appeared to be the leader of the party which consisted of about a score of men, checked his horse. This movement seemed to be taken by his companions as a signal to do likewise, and the cavalcade came to a stop.

"If I am not mistaken, this is the place," said

the leader, directing his remark to no particular person, as if certain of his ground. Several of the men, assuming that an answer was expected, either in affirmation or denial, spoke up at once, and assured him that he was right.

"He is the rankest copperhead in the whole country," asserted one, "and absolutely refuses to fight for the government."

"Well, you haven't done much fighting yourself, Spelker," said a strong-faced man, apparently of middle age. "I know Roger Bellray as well as any of you and better than most, and I haven't any use for a copperhead, either, any more than the rest of you, but even Beelzebub is entitled to his due. Joe Barth's farm—you know Joe was killed at Stone River—lies over there a matter of a mile or so. When he enlisted more than a year ago he left nobody to look after things at home but his wife and three small children, the oldest a girl of fourteen. There were plenty of Union folks all around them, but who was it that cut their wheat, and gathered their corn, and dug their potatoes, and such like, without letting it cost them a cent? Why, Roger Bellray's hired hands. And who sowed their wheat and planted their corn for this year's crop, and who cut the wheat last week? Why, Roger Bellray's men."

There was a touch of resentment and indignation in the speaker's tones that turned all eyes upon him—except those of the leader, who was

giving no attention to the talk—and some of them were not of friendly look. This was notably so with Spelker, who was quick to perceive the covert but unmistakable reflection on his own fighting qualities. He was a much younger man than the other and, unlike most of his companions, did not have the appearance of a man who followed rural pursuits.

"I know something of Roger Bellray, too," he said, hotly, "and if he had his just deserts he would be strung up as a warning to others of his kind."

"He hasn't interfered with your business of selling undersized mules to the government, has he?" asked the older man, adding relevantly: "I should think a man in your business would want the war to go on as long as possible."

"Dry up, men," the leader broke in sharply, with unmilitary phrase, lifting his eyes from memoranda that he had been scanning, and noting the growing ill-humor of the disputants. "All of you but Markle, Breezner and Thompson ride into the shade over there and rest your horses."

With the three men named he then turned into the lane and galloped toward the house, soon reaching the gate which separated the lane from the grounds surrounding the buildings. One of the men opened it without dismounting, and, with little regard for the graveled path, all rode their horses up to the broad veranda that ran

along the front of the residence and around its southern exposure.

Here the leader leaped to the ground and started to mount the steps. As he did so a girl came through the open door. It was Kate Bellray. She had been watching the horsemen for some time; had seen them stop in the road and point toward the house, and had waited the coming of the four who now faced her. Her eyes were steady and fearless, but they showed traces of anxiety as she surveyed her unceremonious visitors.

On her appearance the leader stopped upon the porch steps, from which position he now addressed her, without taking the pains to lift his hat.

"This is Roger Bellray's place, is it not?"

"It is," said the girl tersely.

"My name is Bracken—Captain Bracken," said the man, now removing his hat as if in his own honor, and bowing stiffly, "and I desire an interview with Mr. Bellray."

"I am sorry that you must be disappointed, sir, but unfortunately my brother is not at home," said Kate, her uneasiness deepening.

"Will it avail me anything to ask where he is, and when he is expected to return?" asked the visitor with growing politeness.

"He rode away this morning and left no word when he would come back. If you desire to

leave any message for him I will deliver it," she returned.

"Thank you," said he, "but it is entirely a personal matter. You are certain are you, Miss Bellray, that your brother has left the house?"

His words and manner both expressed suspicion of her truthfulness and doubt as to the accuracy of the information she had given. Raising her eyes and looking toward the highway she saw the other members of his party standing by their horses under the trees. She was filled with alarm, but kept her self-possession, and the soft lines of her mouth showed a trifle more of firmness.

"You are the first man, Captain Bracken, if that be your name and your title, who has ever dared to question my word," she said with dignity. "While I do not know your mission or purpose, you are at liberty to enter the house and satisfy yourself. My brother does not hide from any man."

For a few moments the visitor was silent, as if uncertain about the way he should act. Then he said:

"I beg your pardon, Miss Bellray, if I have unintentionally offended you. I see clearly that my words were unwarranted. And, after all, the matter is of small consequence"—here he coughed a little in an affected way that did not escape her—"only a little information which I was told he

could give me better than any other. We can get along, I suppose, by inquiring elsewhere—possibly at the next house. May I trouble you to tell me who lives there?”

He pointed through the trees to a large gray house with tall red chimneys, a mile away, which, with its substantial outbuildings, occupied a slight elevation in the midst of a wide sweep of fine grounds. Next to the Bellray place it was the most conspicuous one in the neighborhood, and belonged to my mother.

“That place belongs to Mrs. Trenham,” Kate said. “I am ignorant of the character of the information you are seeking, but perhaps I can give it as well as she or my brother.”

“Mrs. Trenham, did you say, Miss?” the Captain inquired keenly, apparently heedless of what else she had said. “Possibly she has a son?”

Kate felt that she had inadvertently given testimony that this man regarded as valuable, but she answered calmly:

“She has a son somewhere.”

“Who is not at home?” said the inquisitor.

“Not only that, but he has not been there for many months.”

“Oh!” The exclamation showed disappointment of a hope that had been suddenly aroused. Then he added with a smile that to her quick wits needed no interpretation: “He is in the army, of course, fighting for his country—no doubt a

fine young man. Thank you for your trouble, Miss Bellray. Good-day."

He went quickly down the steps, climbed into his saddle and the quartet trotted their horses out of the yard, leaving the gate open as they went, and cantered down the lane. Kate walked to the gate and closed it, then stood there until Captain Bracken and his companions had joined the men in the highway, and until they all started away together. Nor did she leave her post until the cloud of dust following the riders rose far beyond the entrance to my mother's farm and showed that her late questioner had not stopped there. Then with a deep sigh she went back to the veranda and sat down.

"Oh, will it never end?" she said, half aloud. "Was there ever another situated as I am? Oh, Roger; oh, John."

She buried her face in her hands, pressing it tightly, as if she would hide from herself some frightful spectacle or a no less shocking truth. She did not wish to think just then; her thoughts of late had kept her awake at night and weighed heavily upon her spirits by day. As she sat there, feeling that tears were near, but resolved that she would not shed them, an elderly woman, wearing a frilled white cap on her gray hair, and a large white handkerchief, folded crosswise, pinned loosely about her throat, came and stood in the

doorway. Her eyes fell upon the bent figure of the girl.

"What is the trouble, my dear?" she asked anxiously, going forward and stroking affectionately the wavy hair and smoothing it away from the rounded neck, throbbing with the hot young blood that coursed through it.

Reaching up and taking in her own the hand that rested so lovingly on her head, Kate sprang to her feet

"Aunt Sarah," she exclaimed, fiercely, "they are going to arrest Roger."

"They—who? And why should he be arrested?" asked the aunt, in trembling alarm, her face paling.

"Some awful men; I don't know who they are, only one of them said his name was Captain Bracken. He didn't say he was going to arrest him, but I know it, I feel it." She shuddered, as if stricken with a chill.

For a little time the elder woman was dumb. She had not seen what had taken place, and could not understand the cause of this startling outburst. Her lips moved as if she were trying to frame words into speech, but it was a full minute before she could do so.

"Why should they want to arrest Roger, Kate?" she said at last, repeating her former question. "What has he done that is unlawful?"

I think you have been frightened into nervousness, my dear."

"Oh, don't you know? Can't you guess? It is because they think he belongs to a terrible secret society that means to help the rebels, and is a traitor and renegade."

"Hush, child, hush," said her aunt in a hoarse, excited whisper, looking about her apprehensively. "It is impossible."

"I wish it were, but it is not; it is true."

"Girl," cried the old lady, moving away a little distance, and speaking in a terrible voice, not loud, but tense with strong feeling, "you forget yourself when you thus accuse your brother; you don't know what you say."

Kate shook her head mournfully. "But he is," she said firmly, her face pale with suppressed emotion. "I have tried not to believe it, to disguise it, to call it by another name, but it is of no use. And yet I will die for him, if by doing so I can save him from the shame of it."

She led her aunt to a chair and forced her into it, for she was trembling and weak. Then Kate knelt by her side and became the comforter. With a sudden revulsion of feeling she said pathetically:

"Do not think of the awful things I said, aunty. Let us keep our hearts strong. Whatever he is we will fight for him, won't we?" Her voice was child-like and pleading.

"There, there, my dear," returned the aunt, soothingly, looking down into the troubled eyes that were turned toward her's, blind with gathering tears. "It can not be as bad as you think. You have misunderstood and have been frightened. Roger is a brave, true man. He went to war to fight the Mexicans. I have heard it told how daring he was—always at the place where there was the most danger, always the first of his company in every charge. You know he enlisted in Mississippi while there visiting your poor mother's brother, and there is a letter in the house written by his colonel—"

"Yes, aunty; I know," Kate broke out, "but that colonel is now the arch traitor of them all, and that letter should be destroyed."

"Do not forget that the writer was then fighting for his country, my dear."

"No; nor that he is now trying to rend it asunder," said Kate, with undiminished spirit.

Aunt Sarah was silent. She was as patriotic as her niece, but age had cooled her blood. After an interval she spoke again:

"At all events, my child, remember that Roger Bellray is the kindest and gentlest of men. He has been both father and brother to you and as good as a son to me, a woman to whom children have been denied. He has his own reasons for anything that he may do, and we must give him

credit for honesty and courage, wherever his opinions may lead him. Other people have their troubles in these terrible times as well as we. There is Mrs. Trenham, poor lady, whose boy is in the rebel army."

A flush spread over Kate's face as she responded: "Yes, Aunt Sarah, but he was born in the South and his father and all of his people were southerners. These things make a great difference, and I admire him because he has gone out to fight, though he is wrong, oh, so wrong."

She confessed it all to me afterward; at first little by little, with much of the old playful perversity, then in detail and connectedly, withholding nothing.

"Oh, my dear," said Aunt Sarah, placing her hand on the fair head resting face downward on the chair arm, "you admire him for reasons beyond that—reasons that come from your heart, if such a thing can be. I saw how it was before he went away, and—forgive me, child—I heard you crying your poor eyes out that night in your room when you knew he was going. And when the war is over, my dear—"

"Oh, when the war is over—"

"And peace has come and everything is forgiven and forgotten, there will be happiness for you and for us all. Let us pray that never again in this land will a strife come that will divide

families and bring the heartaches that this has brought. Be patient, my dear, and strong, and whatever happens to your brother be true to him as he has been true to you.''

They rose and went into the house.

CHAPTER XI

THE SHOOTING OF BELLRAY

It was late that afternoon when Roger Bellray came home. To the anxious eyes of his sister, who had awaited his coming in great suspense, he seemed singularly gloomy and preoccupied. He greeted her with accustomed affection and then went to his working room at a corner of the house, where he shut himself in and remained until summoned to the evening meal.

Having eaten sparingly, as if without appetite, he again repaired to his room, and, as had lately been his habit, turned the bolt behind him. For weeks he had carried the key to the one door in his pocket, and had forbidden entrance in his absence. At table he had been mostly silent; and when to inquiries or statements addressed to him he would either make no response, or else answer with an irrelevance that showed overwhelming abstraction, attempts at conversation ceased altogether.

Kate found no opportunity to speak to him of Captain Bracken's visit, although she was burning with eagerness to do so. She was filled with

a dread which approached terror, and had an intuitive conviction that he was threatened with some great danger. Much of the talk of the country concerning her brother had reached her. The sentiment was divided, some speaking for him and others bitterly denouncing him. Among the former class were those who shared his political opinions, and they were considerable in number. Many of these, however, did not approve of conduct of which she had heard only vague hints, but which his enemies summed up in the one word—treason; the majority desiring peace for themselves, did not see fit to be too assertive in behalf of another.

Their timid, half-hearted apologies were taken as proof of all that was charged, and did far more harm than good. In his own conversations with her he had frankly admitted enough to confirm a great deal of the suspicion directed against him. His many long and unexplained absences, meetings behind a locked door sometimes with his friends, often with strangers, together with recent mysterious night rides from which he would not return oftentimes till daybreak, in her mind could not be reconciled with good citizenship.

What did they mean? These and other things filled her with foreboding and apprehension and caused her to believe that he was engaged in some secret undertaking or conspiracy. The latter word forced itself into her unwilling mind,

and called up visions of all that was sinister, hideous and repellent.

Was the storm that he had provoked now ready to break about his misguided but undaunted head? Kate hesitated long before disturbing him, and consulted with her aunt about the matter. The latter agreed with her as to the importance of acquainting him with what had taken place, although she still affected, with poor success, to treat the incident lightly. When Kate had once made up her mind she acted promptly.

Going to the door behind which Roger sat she rapped smartly upon its oaken panelling. In a moment she heard the bolt slip back, the door was opened an inch or two, and behind the crack appeared her brother's face. There was something so furtive and unnatural in the eyes that met hers that she involuntarily recoiled. The curtains had been drawn though it was yet daylight, and the room was in semi-darkness.

"What is it, Kate?" he asked. His voice had in it a quality that she had heard before on only one occasion, and that was when he had started out to find and chastise a drunken boor who had insulted her on the highway; it was cold and steely, like the clink of a sword.

"Roger, I must speak with you," she said, her face now close to his own.

"Put it off until to-morrow, dear; I am very

busy," he returned more softly, 'making a motion as if to close the door.

"But I can not, Roger," she persisted appealingly, quickly thrusting her hand in the aperture that he might not shut her out. "I must speak to you to-night—now; your own safety is concerned, my brother. Even in an hour it may be too late."

Her words and manner plainly made an impression upon him and convinced him that it was not an ordinary communication that she wanted to make. He looked at her intently for a moment, then turned his head and seemed to survey the room. Facing her again he said hastily:

"Wait a moment and you may come in here."

He closed and fastened the door, and while she stood waiting for it to be opened again she heard him moving about, and sounds that seemed to indicate that he was putting the contents of the room in order. Presently he came and admitted her.

"Now, what is it that troubles you?" he said quickly. "Don't mind my manner, little girl," he added, instantly conscious that the abrupt, almost savage inquiry had startled her. "I have much on my mind to-night."

Much on his mind! She knew it without the telling and had come to add still more, but only to save him from a worse fate.

"Roger, you are in danger of arrest," she said.

"Oh, is that all you have to tell me?" he exclaimed, with a dry laugh. "My arrest has been many times threatened, but I will not be intimidated and have so warned them. They will not dare do it."

He had seated himself at a narrow table occupying the center of the room, and had placed a chair for her near his own.

"This is different, brother; they have been here to-day looking for you."

"Who?" The word was uttered contemptuously.

"Several mounted men — strangers — headed by one who called himself Captain Bracken."

"Captain Bracken!" Roger rose to his feet, all indifference gone, and his eyes blazing through the shadows that were rapidly gathering. One of the curtains fluttering at an open window attracted his attention, and he walked quickly across the room and pulled down and fastened the sash, a service that he likewise performed at the sole remaining window, though the room was already hot and close. Then he came back and resumed his seat.

"How many men did he have?" he asked.

All traces of his sudden excitement had gone save the fire that smouldered in his eyes, and the question was asked in a matter of fact way, as if he took little interest in the occurrence but

merely desired to gratify an idle curiosity. Kate was not deceived, however; she knew that he regarded the information as of vital importance.

"Three were with him at the house and I counted fifteen more in the road. The three looked as if they might be military men of some sort, but most of the others, I think, were homeguards; some of them appeared to be farmers. I thought I recognized the government horse-buyer, Spelker.

"Kate, you are right, I am in danger," Roger said gently, but with a certain tenseness that deepened her alarm. "If this Bracken contemplates my arrest—as he no doubt does—he will leave no stone unturned to accomplish it. He is a persistent and implacable man-hunter who takes his orders and pursues them unremittingly and to the letter. I find no fault with him for that; he is only doing his duty. My quarrel is with those who have set the hounds on my track, and I shall not give them the satisfaction they seek if I can help it. Because my opinions have differed from theirs they have annoyed and threatened me, and now, it seems, have determined to run me down. Military law has taken the place of the civil law, and trials by court-martial have been substituted for trials by jury even in this state, where the courts are open and the civil authorities capable of fulfilling their functions. If I am taken by the minions of the

provost I have no assurance of a fair hearing, nor even of a trial itself. Constitutional government in this country is at an end and partisan hate and drum-head injustice are running riot to the distraction of the people."

He spoke at first with calmness and self-restraint, but as he proceeded his sister perceived a growing rancor. She had heard him talk somewhat in this strain before, but not in the same manner. Every word dropped from his lips white-hot, like sparks from the anvil under the hammer of the smith, and she trembled as she thought of what might happen if those whom he considered his enemies should now come suddenly upon him. He had indulged her antagonistic views as childish and harmless, while she, in her patriotic innocence, had considered him affected by a mania peculiar to troublous times and intensified by a narrow intolerance on the part of some of his neighbors. But there was something so deadly in his manner now that she was dumb.

"These friends of yours, my sister," he continued, not unkindly yet with a faint touch of irony, "purpose to ruin me and possibly to have my life. I do not intend to allow the one nor to yield the other. Listen: Within two hours I could have enough men here to rid the country of Captain Bracken and his force; within six hours I could have an army. That sounds like bragging, you think, but it is not so. General Morgan crossed

the river to-day at Brandenburg with three thousand cavalry."

It was so dark in the room that he could not see how this statement affected Kate, but she felt her face grow cold as the blood left it, then hot and flushed as it came back again—partly, as she admitted in recounting these facts, because a certain captain of horse, if alive, was with General Morgan, but more on account of the impudence of the fearless raider himself. She had heard much of his remarkable exploits, but did not believe that he would dare attempt to ride the highways of the North as he had those of the South, clanking defiance to his foes.

Roger without pausing went on: "I knew this rebel chieftain in Mexico, as I have told you. We were in the hospital together. If I should say the word he would make quick work of my enemies. He would ride them down as grass under his horse's feet."

"But you will not say it, will you, Roger? You will find some other way." Her voice had come to her again, and once started she continued vehemently: "This dreadful man should be driven back into the river and John Trenham with him."

"They are hard men to drive; they have been in the habit of driving others. As to asking help from General Morgan, I shall not do so if I can avoid it. Only in the last extremity could I

think of so wild a thing. I am sorry he has come here and hope he will speedily depart, for his coming only intensifies local prejudice and adds to the difficulties of men like myself."

There was a ring of genuine regret in his tones, and something else that she could not define but that made her heart ache. He arose and walked up and down the floor, his head bent forward, his hands opening and closing nervously. Presently he resumed his seat.

"Kate," he said, "this is my house and I have a right to stay here and a right to defend it. In the eyes of the law I swear that I have committed no crime, but there is no longer any law. To disagree with the opinions held by the majority has now become the greatest offense, and no punishment, however atrocious or malignant, is too severe to be meted out to the culprit. But I shall not run or hide; instead, I will stay here and defy them all, and fight them if they push me to it—yes, fight them, by God!" He lifted his clenched hand high above his head in a gesture of profound anger and determination.

"Roger, think of what you say and of what you would do—the consequences, the ruin of it. Think of yourself and—me."

"You?" He paused and his arm fell nerveless on the table. "Heaven forgive me, child, for I had only myself in mind. You—our dead mother's last born."

He uttered the final words slowly, huskily, and there was something strangely like a half-suppressed sob following them.

"No, no; don't think of me," she cried, brokenly, deeply affected by his emotion. "I was selfish to say it. You must act as you believe right; only avoid a conflict, for the odds against you are so many."

"I don't care for the odds, and would not if they were still greater," he said, again getting up. Taking her hands in his own he raised her to her feet. "What I see now, is, that if the calamity of which I spoke should come, you would suffer more than I. There will be a day of reckoning, but it need not be this day or tomorrow. For your sake—for the sake of your peace of mind and happiness—I am going to do a thing that I would do for no one else on earth. I will leave home for a time and possibly the storm will pass over. If I stay here I must either submit to be deprived of my liberty and subjected to indignity and insult, or make of this house a fortress and maintain it by force of arms. This I had thought of doing, had even planned to do as against your guerrilla homeguards, but I have no purpose to array myself against the power of the United States government, and it is that power which this Bracken represents. They call me a traitor. Pah!"

He released her hands and going to the end of



"DO YOU THINK I AM PREPARED TO MAKE A DEFENSE?" *page 167.*

the room where there was a mantel above a wide fire-place struck a match and lighted a lamp. Then, stooping, he threw aside a corner of the heavy drugget that covered the floor and in a moment had made a narrow opening through the planking. She watched him in amazement.

“Come here, Kate,” he called, and she went to his side. “Do you think I am prepared to make a defense?” he asked, holding the lamp so that its light shone into the cavity.

The opening into which she looked with startled eyes—the presence of which she had not before even suspected—was of unknown dimensions, but what she could see of it was heaped with rifles and revolvers. One glance at the deadly store, then she drew back, her face pale and quivering. Roger, quickly making things as they were, placed the lamp upon the mantel and turned toward his sister, who had not for a second removed her gaze from his face after lifting it from the hurried inspection of the concealed vault.

“I can trust you, Kate,” he said, not attempting to avoid her eyes, in which he read pity as well as condemnation. “I had not intended to tell you about this, but it is best that you should know. As for me, it will be the worse if these things are discovered here, for they will be evidence against me. If the house is searched and they are found, tell the truth; do not try to shield me. There is no time for me to have them

removed now, but I will speak to Sutton about it, and he can dispose of them if they give him time enough."

Sutton was his farm manager, and while he was quiet and close of mouth, Kate suspected that his opinions were the same as her brother's, for he was in the latter's confidence and was devoted to him.

"Oh, Roger, I did not guess that it had come to this," she said, her voice strained and husky, as if she were on the point of giving way to tears.

The reproach that her words implied seemed to touch him keenly. A momentary resentment flashed across his face but instantly died out, and the only answer he made was to say gently:

"You do not know all, little girl. Some day I may tell you what I have been compelled to submit to and why these arms are here. Now don't say anything more; you can not understand, but until you do, keep your heart open to me, for you are all I have. Send Sutton to me here—he must be about the house—and tell Williams to saddle my horse at once and take him to the back lane and wait for me. Good-bye, child. Do not fret about me. Everything is in order except that"—pointing at the floor—"for I have foreseen some such emergency as this and planned against it. There—good-bye; now go to Sutton and Williams."

While he was speaking he was walking toward

the door, one arm around her shoulders, and when he reached it he kissed her affectionately and let her pass out.

As soon as she was out of the room Kate hastened to execute her brother's commands, for any further delay might endanger his safety. Having done this she went out upon the porch and sat down, a self-appointed sentinel.

The sun had long since vanished behind the low western hills, above which hung the moon in its first quarter, and twilight was deepening into darkness. The air was sweet and balmy and the peacefulness of earth and sky made her troubles seem all the greater by contrast. The fire-flies flashed their yellow lights here and there through the shrubbery, and far up in the sky, sounded the cry of the whippoorwill as it circled through the dusk. From distant pasture fields came the faint, occasional tinkle of sheep bells and the lowing of cattle. A boy was whistling vigorously in the barn-lot, his evening tasks accomplished, and she noticed that the tune which had struck his fancy was that of a new patriotic song.

But presently there came to her ears through the night another sound, dull, thumping and ominous. It came from somewhere far down the highway, and was made by the galloping feet of many horses. There was no mistaking that sound—Captain Bracken was coming back, as she had known he would. What troubled her was that

the noise seemed to be divided and to come from different places in the road, as if the approaching horsemen were separated. Almost as soon as she realized this fact she dimly saw several rapidly-moving shadows at the mouth of the lane, reaching which they appeared to change form and to become stationary. But it was not so; they were turning into the lane and were coming toward her.

All doubt removed, she ran into the house and to her brother's door upon which she beat frantically with her hands, calling out that he should make haste. But there was no answer to her blows or cries. She grasped the knob and shook it violently. To her great astonishment the door opened and she fell upon the threshold. Getting to her feet, she entered the room, only to find it empty and dark. Roger had gone.

A great load seemed to be lifted from her. Instantly she became calm and prepared herself to meet the unwelcome visitors, who could now be heard at the gate. By the time she had reached the hall heavy steps sounded on the porch, then loud knocking on the casing of the open door. A servant entered the hall in response to the knocking, but Kate walked before her toward the man who was standing impatiently just within the entrance; it was Captain Bracken. He greeted her civilly and inquired abruptly for her brother.

"Mr. Bellray is not at home," she answered, quietly.

"Look here, my young lady," said the officer incisively, "you must tell me where he is or I shall be obliged to take it upon myself to find out."

"What do you want with him?" she asked, with the wish to gain time, for she felt that every minute might be valuable to Roger.

"I want nothing with him; I want him," he said with a grim but poor attempt at humor. "He will understand my business quick enough if he is as smart as they say he is, and, mind you, I have no time to waste. One of my men that I left in the neighborhood for that purpose saw him return home this afternoon, and knows that he had not left this house up to thirty minutes ago. Excuse me, Miss Bellray, but he can not escape; my men are everywhere about the place, and every road, lane and by-way is watched."

Without further parley he called from the door and three men came to him—the same who had been with him on his previous appearance.

"Search the house, and be quick about it," he commanded, and they scattered in obedience.

"Pardon the liberty I am taking, Miss Bellray. My duty requires of me many unpleasant services," the captain explained, apologetically.

Kate, who had seated herself, made no response, but listened composedly to the noise made

by the searchers, as they, having possessed themselves with lights, went through the house from room to room. By the time they had returned to their leader to report their search fruitless, the hall was filled with the members of the household, gaping and staring, and in a high state of excitement and alarm, which the calm face of the young mistress tended greatly to allay.

"You see, sir," she said satirically, addressing the officer, "that you would have saved yourself much unnecessary trouble if you had been disposed to believe me. But I felt assured that you would not, though you merely desired a little information from my brother which you believed he could give better than any other."

While she spoke lightly she was apprehensive over Captain Bracken's statement that all the ways leading from the place were watched, and feared that Roger's escape was impossible. The captain, on his part, was in very bad humor over his defeat, and with mutterings of anger, in which could be heard half-suppressed oaths, hurriedly left the house with his men, Kate following as far as the porch.

They were in the act of mounting their horses when the dull sound of shots, fired irregularly and seemingly far away, disturbed the quiet of the night. Jumping into their saddles, with an exclamation that froze the blood in the veins of Kate and others of the household who had trooped

out upon the porch after her in their anxiety, the men dashed down the lane as if eager to have a hand in the hunt.

"They are after him!" That was what they had said.

Checking all attempts at talking, Kate, every sense strained and acute, ran down to the gate at the end of the graveled path and stood there filled with terror. After the first shots the silence had been broken for a time only by the rapid thumping of the fleeing horses' feet on the hard ground. But now came another shot, and another, and yet a third much clearer than the others had been, showing that those who had fired them were moving toward the house. And this time, too, they sounded across the fields and were accompanied by the hoarse cries of men. Not a moan escaped the lips of the girl, but her teeth were tightly clenched and her hands gripped each other wildly in the agony of her emotion.

The noises came nearer—the shouting, the cursing, the intermittent shooting; then the patter of running feet coming from the direction of the orchard to her left. Suddenly a man leaped the fence separating the orchard from the yard and came running toward the house, bareheaded, his clothes torn and disarranged and with a smoking revolver in his hand; it was Roger. He had nearly reached the place where she stood, when another shot rang out sharply and he pitched

wildly forward and fell face downward almost at her feet.

Kate ran forward and endeavored to help him to rise, but no answering movement rewarded her effort, and as she released the motionless form her hands were wet with his life's blood. Just then the pursuers dashed into the yard, breathless and panting, and foremost among them was Spelker, the horse-buyer. He stooped and turned the body over roughly, as if it were the carcass of a wild beast.

"A mighty good riddance," exclaimed he, with heartless brutality, "and I think I am entitled to the credit for it."

"Did you kill my brother?" cried Kate, breaking away from her aunt and the others who had come about her, and moving quickly toward the speaker. Her eyes blazed through the deathly pallor of her face, and she looked the very embodiment of vengeance.

Spelker drew back, but assumed a defiant air: "I wasn't talking to you, Miss, but since you ask the question I'll say I think I did. We had orders to ketch him."

"It is murder—murder, and you will pay for his life; remember it, you worse than monster!" she cried, in a voice that made his soul shrink.

As she was led away from the terrible scene, Captain Bracken pushed his way into the crowd, throwing men aside, right and left. When he

saw what had been done he was furious, demanded to know who had committed the deed, and swore that his orders had been exceeded. Spelker slunk into the background, and when the men went away it was remarked that he was shunned by many of his companions and walked by himself to the place where those who were dismounted had left their horses. One man lingered a little behind, and stooping quickly took one of the lifeless hands reverently in his, pressed it tenderly, and then hastened on after the others. It was the elderly man who had spoken in Roger's favor at the entrance to the lane. Even among his enemies he had friends.

CHAPTER XII

THE GARB OF A REBEL

THE news that Roger Bellray, "the butternut," had been shot traveled slowly that night in the district where the violence had been committed. Many who heard the firing knew that Morgan's raiders had come into the county that day and attributed it to marauding bands from his force seeking to terrorize the inhabitants. Thus believing, and considering that they had no business abroad while these reckless men were about, they took counsel of their fears and shut themselves up in their homes, there to stay until daylight, but not to sleep.

My mother, however, not far from whose house the first shots had been fired, knew better. The Bellray land extended to within a few hundred yards of her residence, and what was known as the back lane furnished a more private and convenient communication between the two places than the public road.

One of her servants, a negro, returning that evening from Corydon at nightfall, had been overtaken by a party of mounted men and questioned

by one as to the existence of any private means of access to the Bellray premises. Before he could answer, another of the party, in whom he recognized a horse-buyer who had tried in vain to persuade my mother to part with some of her stock, spoke up and said that he knew of the back lane, adding that it ought to be watched as "he" would most likely try to escape by it.

The negro remembered this man particularly because of his former insolent bearing. He had gone so far as to accuse my mother of saving her animals for the use of the rebels when they should come, and had otherwise caused her to be subjected to petty annoyances. The servant, therefore, hastened to tell her of these mysterious things, and they certainly lost nothing of their strangeness in the recital.

From this my mother surmised that something seriously affecting her neighbor was afoot. Not long after, she heard the firing and shouting, which noises rapidly receded toward Bellray's. After an interval came the final shot, smothered by the distance, and then silence, which was broken later by the clatter of many hoofs galloping in the direction of the town. These unexplained and extraordinary things were so disquieting that she became highly nervous and agitated, starting at harmless noises and half fearing an attack upon her own home.

So great had been the effect of these neighborhood events upon the servant that the wonderful and terrifying news of the rebel invasion, which was being talked of in the town to the exclusion of every other topic, and which had brought out and armed the inhabitants for resistance, was for the time driven from his mind, and was not communicated by him to my mother along with the fresher happening. When the information did reach her it came from the kitchen, where the black bearer of ill tidings had told it to Martha, the cook, under the stimulating effects of his belated supper, and she related it to the mistress of the establishment.

The impression it made upon her was profound and for a while she was nearly overwhelmed by this additional shock. For the news brought with it both hope and dread—hope that she might be permitted to see her son, and dread of the consequences of the bold step that my commander had taken. But in the end the hope overbore all other considerations, and by it her spirits were rallied. She believed that I would come to her if it were possible—it might be that night—and so resolved to remain awake and wait.

For a time she made an effort to read, but could not; she tried to engage her mind at some light sewing with which she was wont to beguile herself, but threw it aside. Again and again she

went to her open window, looked out into the night and listened.

It was at the window, about an hour before midnight, that I saw her. The light in her room threw her figure into bold relief. I had already dismounted and tied my horse and was at the gate, where I paused a moment to make sure of my surroundings. Then I hurried toward the house and placed myself beneath her window.

"Mother," said I. She gasped with joy and leaned out.

"Is it you, my boy?" she called down to me, tremulously.

"Yes, mother; it is John."

In a moment, almost, she was downstairs at the door, and had opened it and thrown herself into my arms. And when she had got me into the house she sat by my chair, stroking my brown cheeks and smoothing my hair as in the days of my childhood. A son returning to his mother from the wars is like one coming back from the grave, and for a time she can do no more than look at him and hear his voice and lavish upon him those little loving attentions which only a mother can bestow.

So it was now; but presently she bethought herself and ordered that supper be prepared for me. When it was ready and I was at the table I asked her about the Bellrays. In the joy of having me with her again she had forgotten all else,

but my question brought forth a recital of the startling happenings of the early evening. She told me, also, of other things concerning these friends.

"I must know what that shooting means, mother," I said, greatly troubled and guessing the truth. "I will ride over there at once."

Without doing that much I could not have returned to camp satisfied. While finishing the meal, which I did hastily after that, I asked many questions and learned that Roger Bellray was in very bad repute with those people of the county who favored a vigorous prosecution of the war against the seceding states, and who held that any belief which did not rise to the full height of their own was treasonable.

He was also suspected—not without reason, as I knew—of holding relations of some sort with friends of the Confederacy, and of giving information and rendering other assistance to the government of the Secessionists. As to the latter suspicion, I did not believe it justified. But Bellray was a daring man of deep feeling and many extreme views, and capable of doing or undertaking to do the thing that was most violently opposed by others, even though it did not commend itself wholly to his judgment.

I did not know, therefore, how far local antagonism and proscription had driven him, nor to what perverse conduct he had been provoked.

But this I did know, then and afterward, that he refused to open his mind in recognition of the spirit of the times. He believed that he might still assert his independence as a man, and that the right to think and talk as he pleased should not be denied to him any more than to those whose views upon public questions differed from his own. His trouble lay in failing to realize that traits of character which may be given full sway with impunity in time of peace are, in time of civil war, dangerous possessions in a locality where the people maintain a conflicting and unfriendly sentiment.

To my great relief I found that my mother had lived quietly and without notable disturbance. True, she felt that she had been socially isolated and discountenanced since it became known that I had "joined the rebels." But it had also come to her in a roundabout way that the people had not expected me to do anything else, considering my southern birth and connection.

She had remained mostly at home, seeing few visitors, and had maintained intimate relations with none excepting the Bellray household, which was, as everybody knew, divided in opinion upon the questions of the day, though still united in the love and confidence that had distinguished the family life. How it would be with her from this time on if it became generally known that I was an officer under the great raider I hardly

dared to think. And yet I felt that she would remain free from serious annoyance unless, by some unlucky deed, the populace should be aroused to a resentment so violent that it would injure the innocent if the guilty were not at hand.

It was long past midnight when I rode away from my mother's gate. A few minutes brought me to the familiar path called the back lane, which ran between the fields to the Bellray house. Save the steady thumping of my horse's feet on the dry turf few sounds broke the stillness of the night. The rasping song of the katydid, and here and there the heavy breathing of a cow by the roadside, the distant bark of a dog, the fluttering of a bird awakened from its nap in the hedge—these I heard, and nothing besides.

Many times before I had ridden through these fields, so fragrant this night with the breath of clover, but how different the circumstances, how widely different my thoughts! How was it now with Roger Bellray? Why were armed men seeking an obscure way to his house? And what was the cause and the result of the commotion of which my mother had told?

Quickening my speed, I soon reached the well-remembered bars separating the lane from the driveway that ran from there along the edge of the peach orchard and toward the side of the house where there was a small garden gate; this opened

into a shaded walk winding to the front of the house. Securing my horse at the bars I hurried forward. It seemed years instead of months since I had been there, so full of events had my recent life been crowded.

When the house came into view amidst the slumbering trees I saw that a bright light was burning in the upper room that Roger had formerly occupied; lights glowing also from the living rooms showed that the household was astir. I went through the little gateway, which I found open, and moved up the walk through the deep shadows.

The evidences of wakefulness at this hour did not in themselves alarm me, for there would be little sleep that night wherever the news of the coming of the raiders penetrated, so wild and inaccurate were the opinions held concerning my gallant General and his men. But these signs of unrest added to the other things of which I had heard intensified the fear that already oppressed me.

I had just reached the black shade of a gigantic syringa standing a little way from the house when two persons, a man and a woman, came through the open door and walked to the edge of the porch, where they stood in the flood of light pouring through the doorway and windows. Within the hall was Mrs. Willing, who stood ir-

resolute for a moment and then turned and ascended the stairs.

The man was Dallas Vawter, the woman, Kate Bellray. It was with difficulty that I restrained an ejaculation of angry surprise. Had this man after all told me the truth at Brandenburg? I would have moved away, but to do so was impossible without revealing my presence, and this was the last thing I desired to do while Vawter remained. I was within ten feet of them, and every word they spoke, though their voices were at first low, came to my ears distinctly. Vawter was the first to speak, and from his words it was plain that they had as yet held little conversation.

"I could not rest without coming to offer my sympathy, Miss Bellray," he said, with well simulated feeling. "It was reported in town that your brother was killed, and I am gratified to learn that the scoundrels failed."

"Yes, thank God, they failed," she returned, fervently. "And you are very kind to trouble yourself so much about our poor affairs, when you must be needed so badly elsewhere this wretched night."

"A wretched night, indeed, filled with dangers and alarms; but you ought to know that I would do anything in the world for you." He moved a little nearer to her, and reaching out endeavored to take her hand. She drew back from

him, but he went on: "Kate, I love you; you must already have known it."

"Please do not speak of such a thing, Mr. Vawter," she exclaimed, moving away as he advanced. "I did not suspect you of thinking that way about me; I supposed you came here only to see my brother."

Vawter's manner changed quickly.

"Indeed," he returned, with a sneer that revealed to her the nature of the man more clearly than any words. "But I will speak of it, if it is the very last thing I ever do. You made me believe that my presence here was agreeable to you, and I really thought that I had made a deep impression upon your innocent heart. As for your fool of a brother—"

"Stop, sir!" cried Kate in a voice that it did me good to hear. "I thought you were a gentleman and treated you civilly. I am sorry now that I did so, and hope you will take yourself away and not again offend us. Since you so sadly misconstrue your reception here it is necessary to speak plainly."

"You are quite tragic, upon my soul you are," Vawter said, with a laugh hard and malicious. "How would you treat me if I were one John Trenham, the bold moss-trooper who, with the raider Morgan's other bandits and red-hands, will come to cut all our throats to-morrow?"

At this my anger rose afresh, and before I could

recollect myself I had slipped my sword from its scabbard, though without serious thought as to what I should do with it. Kate was facing the place where I stood, but Vawter's back was toward me. In my excitement I had momentarily brought my face into the light, and in that moment her eyes met mine. She turned as pale as death and put her hand on the porch railing as if for support, but retained her presence of mind.

"Ah! That touches you, does it?" Vawter added, seeing her emotion and supposing that it was caused by his last remarks.

"Go!" said Kate, straightening herself and pointing toward the gate.

"Oh, you order me away as though I were a contraband nigger. I will go, of course, but let me first tell you —"

"Go, go, as you value your life," she said again, for she saw the gleaming of a naked sword blade through the syringa leaves.

He moved slowly toward the steps. "I don't appreciate the force of your threat, Miss Bellray, since that copperhead brother of yours has sufficient reason for keeping to his bed."

He paused, and removing his hat, bowed low with mock civility. "I was just going to say when you interrupted me, that Captain Trenham will doubtless dangle from a limb in the court-house yard at Corydon before another twelve

hours have passed. Take that for a night-cap, my imperious lady."

Kate fell back as from a blow, and clutched one of the supporting pillars where she stood with wide eyes and heaving breast, while Vawter, having delivered himself of his cowardly speech, went deliberately down the steps. Reaching the bottom, he half turned about as if to say more, and his eyes fell upon me. I had stepped out into the light from the darkness that had concealed me, for I could endure his insolence to this unprotected girl no longer.

"Hound!" said I, forgetting myself and striking him smartly across the face with my open hand, "so I must chastise you twice within the hours of a day. Now do as Miss Bellray bade you—begone!"

He took a step backward, looking at me wickedly.

"'Hound,' and 'begone,' is it, Captain Trenham? Those are words used with dogs, but do not forget that dogs can bite."

Then without another word, but with a malignant scowl on his face, he went down the walk. When he reached the shadows he stopped and half drew from his pocket a pistol, but, reconsidering, went on.

When Vawter had gone away I put him entirely out of my mind and turned toward Kate, who gave me her hand when I got to her at the

door where she was now standing. The welcome she gave me was not formal, for the unusual circumstances of our meeting forbade that, but there was a constraint of manner that made me uncomfortable. And when we went into the house, as we did immediately, neither of us seemed to know precisely what to say to the other.

I held my broad cavalry hat in my hand and was conscious of feeling awkward and out of place. Kate appeared to be a little in fear of me, and in spite of herself moved a step or two further away when, in the full light of the room, her eyes rested on my gray, travel-stained uniform—the unmistakable badge of a rebel in arms. As I saw this action I could not help smiling, and said, for want of something better:

“I am not dangerous, Kate, nor did I garb myself to offend you; my visit to you to-night was not long considered.”

Realizing what she had done she came up to me and again held out her hand, looking now only into my face.

“Forgive me,” she said, simply; “you are the first real rebel that I have seen, and I was trying hard to persuade myself to be frightened, which was very ridiculous in me, of course, seeing that it is only you. But you know what I have always thought.”

“I have never for a moment forgotten it, but

we will not let that trouble us now," said I, desiring to get away from this old, dangerous ground.

"Tell me about Roger."

"Then you have heard about it?"

"Only that something very strange had taken place. I came to see my mother and found her uneasy and disturbed about your family on account of things that she had heard over this way. She herself will see you in the morning. What has happened?"

She briefly, and with some agitation as the events of the past hours were recalled, narrated the story that I have already outlined.

"They thought he was dead, and so did we all until he was carried into the house. Then it was discovered that he was breathing, and he soon returned to consciousness but showed traces of delirium. We sent for Dr. White who found that the bullet that struck him in the head had made only a glancing wound. He has two other injuries but they also, thank God, are superficial. He is sleeping now. Dr. White thinks he may be able to travel, but says that he should remain at home, which under the circumstances is impossible. Information that he is alive will get abroad and his enemies will finish the work they have begun if he does not go away. Oh, it is all so dreadful, so dreadful!"

She went to the window and looked out into

the darkness through the blurring tears that filled her eyes. I went over and stood beside her, my heart swelling with a great pity and tenderness—aye, and much more than that. For a little time we were both silent, then she turned her face toward mine, hastily wiping away the tears.

“What shall I do?” she asked chokingly. “I have no one to advise me. Roger is utterly without friends here who would aid him excepting those who hold views like his own, and I will never call upon them—never!”

“I am only a rebel, Kate, with a leave of absence from my command that will expire in two hours, but I will help you if I can. Roger must not stay here; if he is able let him go with me.”

“Oh, no, no!” she exclaimed. “He must not do that—he never, I am sure, thought of going so far. It is enough that—” She stopped suddenly, confused and disconcerted.

“It is enough that I am a rebel,” said I, finishing her sentence. “I am glad to hear you say that, for it shows that you have thought of me, even though you have done it reproachfully. But I did not mean that he should link himself to the precarious fortunes of the Confederate soldiery, as I have done. Show me the way and we will go and talk with him about it. We need disturb him only a moment.”

No definite plan whereby I could aid her brother had occurred to me; but an idea that he

might be carried along with our forces as an ostensible prisoner or something of the kind had partially formed itself in my mind. Beyond that I could see no way just then, and the scheme was so poor and weak that I did not mention it to Kate, hoping that after consulting with Roger some better arrangement might be suggested.

In the matter of taking and giving blows I could bear my share, but to get this man away from the reach of his enemies without compromising him still more in their sight required a delicate strategy in which I felt that I would be little better than a blunderer. And yet if the situation was as bad as his sister believed it to be he must be taken away, whatever might befall.

We went up the stairs, Kate's arm through mine, her hand resting confidently on the traitorous cloth of which my sleeve was made. At the head of the stairs we met Mrs. Willing, who, on seeing me, started back with an exclamation of fright, as if I had been some horrible specter.

"It is only Captain Trenham, Aunt Sarah," said Kate, reassuringly.

"And I thank heaven that it is only you, Mr. Trenham," she returned, her face lighting up in recognition. "Whatever else you may be you are our friend—that we know—and we are in great fear and distress." Then she turned to Kate. "Oh, my poor, poor child, how tired you look."

After a word or two she passed on down the stairs, and we entered Roger's room, where we found him reclining on a couch, fully dressed but looking pale and inert. He had had no warning of my presence in the house, but showed no surprise on seeing me. As I entered, he got upon his feet from instinctive courtesy, and came forward to meet me, moving unsteadily. In the middle of the room he reeled as from dizziness or weakness, and would have fallen had I not hurried to his support and led him back to the couch.

"I am all right, John," he said, smiling vacantly. "I rose too quickly and it made my head swim a little, that's all. I think I fell from my horse coming from town, didn't I, Kate? He must have shied at something. I heard in the town that Lincoln had been elected. If that is true it will make a lot of trouble, John—maybe bring war. Douglas should have been chosen."

I turned from Roger and looked at Kate. A deep pallor was on her face and the hand that lay in her lap trembled. This was not delirium; it was different from the vagaries of fever and had root in a deeper cause. I remembered hearing it told how, coming from the town where he had gone to learn the result of the last presidential election, he had received an injury that was supposed to have been caused by a fall from his horse, and was brought home senseless. He had speedily recovered, however, and his sister, then at

school, was not sent for. But now he was living in that period again, and all subsequent things, as it turned out, were to him as if they had never been.

"They need not have sent for you, Kate; it is nothing at all serious—why, child, how you have grown! You are almost a woman now—strange that I didn't notice it before—and you look so much like our mother. Well, now that you are here you can stay until after the holidays. And, John, I hadn't heard that you had come home. You look strong and rugged—French living has agreed with you, boy, but if that is the kind of uniform they dressed you in over there they have poor taste; there is nothing to equal American blue. I have not seen your father since I was hurt; how is he?"

My father, who was ill at the time of Roger's former injury, had been dead for nearly three years, but I could not bring myself to say so. Before I could formulate a satisfactory answer he went on:

"The election will sorely disappoint him. He favored Breckinridge, you know. The people ought to have chosen Douglas—a man in no sense a radical—and he would have found a way to avert the trouble that is threatening us. Pardon me, but I feel tired and think I can sleep a little. Ride over to-morrow. Good-night."

He lay back wearily on his pillow, closed his

eyes and seemed to be oblivious of his surroundings. But in a moment he roused and spoke his sister's name. She bent over him, putting her hand on his troubled head.

"I find that I am very weak; have I been ill long?"

Kate hesitated about her answer and looked at me. I nodded my head affirmatively, thinking that he might be comforted.

"Yes, my brother; you have been ill a long time," she said.

"I thought it must be so," he returned faintly.

And thus we left him, as completely separated from recent events as if the shot fired by the horse-buyer had taken fatal effect. Only time could tell how long the affliction would last, but while it endured he was safe from the troubles that had beset him. No need to think now of removing him or of devising other schemes for his safety, and while it grieved me much to see him so, I felt relieved of a disagreeable and delicate responsibility.

As we went down, the tall clock in the angle of the stairs marked the quarter before three. The short night was nearly at an end, and I had a good twelve miles to ride. I should have gone at once, but could not do so without stopping to speak to Kate some words of encouragement about her brother.

Then Vawter came again into my mind and I

inquired as to his relations with Roger, learning that he had been frequently at the house, sometimes coming with Roger's friends and sometimes alone. Kate said that her brother had latterly spoken of the man as if suspicious of him. Beyond this she knew nothing of him or his purposes and I did not enlighten her as to the little that I knew. For it was little to be sure, yet sufficient, taken with what she had told me, to satisfy me that he had in some way been involved in Roger's misfortune.

On her part, Kate steadily refrained from asking questions concerning myself. I was alive and well—that she could see—and if she were interested in anything else that had happened to me since I had last seen her she did not indicate it by words. But her manner, I thought, told as much as language could.

In the presence of the night's increasing terrors she now saw only individuals and effects; principles and causes were put out of sight, if not forgotten. Her spirit was not broken, only depressed. She seemed not to think whether my coat was gray or blue, nor to care whether it was emblematic of the cause of the North or of the South.

Mrs. Willing, after a little time, had gone and left us together. She had said that I was a friend, whatever else I might be. And when she had taken herself away I confessed to the one who re-

mained how it was with me—how much more than a friend I would be to her if she would let me. Her distress, her appeal to me for aid, her manifest disposition to overlook, at least for the time, my part in the invasion (for she had not yet once referred to it) all conspired to drive me on to a declaration of my feelings.

Then it was that she seemed to awaken as if from a benumbing dream. Her figure straightened, her face flushed and her eyes were alight with the old fire. I felt my heart sink like lead in my bosom before she had uttered a word, and I inwardly cursed the haste that had seemingly ruined my hope.

“Sir, in my troubles I had forgotten who you were and thought of you only as one in whom I might trust. Now I remember that you came as an enemy, with an army about you, to trample upon us and drive us from our homes under the lead of your desperate chief. Return to him and tell him that we are defenseless, and pray him to finish his work of fire and blood quickly. Oh! why did you bring him here? Why didn’t you take him elsewhere?”

“In God’s name, stop, Kate,” said I, wounded to the heart. “If I could laugh now, I would laugh at your questions. I bring my General here or take him elsewhere? He goes where he pleases, and I am only a humble follower of as brave and knightly a soldier as ever drew sword.

He makes war only upon those who oppose him with arms, and he comes here with as good a right as that which sends your Sheridan and his men through the southern country."

"Perhaps it is so; I understand little about such things, and this general of yours is held in terror, justly or unjustly. I do not want to hurt you, for you have always been good and kind to me. But I am so miserable and unhappy. I have borne so much." She took a tottering step toward me. "Oh, John, had you come under any other circumstances I might have talked differently. When you come again—"

"—If I ever do," I interrupted, bitterly, feeling that I did not care if I should never come again.

"What do you mean by that?" she asked, gaspingly, her eyes wide and staring.

"My life is full of perils and they will now thicken about me. Our way lies through our enemies' country and we can have no support from our friends. Overwhelming numbers will be thrown against us, but we shall not flinch nor turn back. Pardon me, Kate, for opening my heart to you; the things that I told you have burdened me long. I couldn't help it. But I realize now, when it is too late, that I made a mistake, and it only remains for me to leave." I said a word of farewell and turned to go.

"Wait, John," she cried; "you must not go

without knowing. I can not deceive you longer—I am not strong enough. Oh, don't you see that I love you, my dear, and that my heart, which has followed you longingly all these awful months, is breaking for you now?"

In a moment she was in my arms, and though I were a thousand times a rebel it would, she presently admitted, have been the same.

CHAPTER XIII

THE END OF THE HORSE-BUYER

FOR a time, in my happiness, I forgot everything else, and small wonder it was. But the flight of the clock's hands around the dial plate did not cease, and time, which had stood still while the favored Joshua fought a battle, did not wait upon my love-making. I was startled at last by hearing the hour of four strike, and by observing that dawn had come. I had overstayed my leave and would be held remiss in my duty, but I did not doubt that I could make satisfactory excuses to the General. With quickly spoken words of farewell I took my departure.

As upon the preceding morning a heavy fog hung over the face of the earth, and the hour being early it was almost impenetrable to the sight. Objects a hundred feet away were hidden as effectually as if they did not exist. It was a good half hour before sunrise, and the fog would last sometime after that. Without a knowledge of the country the task before me would be both difficult and dangerous. But, knowing the directions well and having a fair acquaintance with the

roads, I had little to fear unless I encountered the enemy's scouts or belated companies of legionaries hastening to repel the invader. As an extra precaution I made a wide detour to the westward, riding along at a hard gallop.

Voices coming through the mist at intervals on both sides of the road, where I judged houses to be, proved that the populace was awake. Now and then I would hear the rumble of wheels and the hammering of horses' feet and would presently come upon a wagon carrying a family fleeing from the path of the raider. Past these I would dash at speed, and, if hailed, make no response.

Nearly half of my journey had been accomplished when the increased light showed that the sun was rising. Objects were discernible at a greater distance, and it became clear that the mist would be rapidly evaporated. I pushed ahead with accelerated speed, the horse—a fresh one that I had obtained from my mother's stable—responding with spirit to every unaccustomed touch of my heavy war spurs.

So far, my course had been taken along a route which subjected me to slight chance of interruption. And after a while, believing that I was beyond any possible outposts of the legionaries, who had been reported to us the night before as concentrating at Corydon, I cut boldly across toward the Mauckport road by which I knew it was the General's purpose to move upon the town.

A brisk ride of a quarter of an hour brought me to this road, and I turned south. The Confederate advance, if it had maintained its position, was less than four miles away. The light in the east had changed from a grayish white to a golden yellow, and the tops of the trees were gleaming in the sun's rays. A thin veil of mist still clung sullenly to the ground, as if determined to oppose to the last the batteries of its powerful enemy.

I had pursued the Mauckport road a mile or more when several horsemen broke suddenly from concealment behind some willows at the roadside, and barred my progress. I was moving at a gait that carried me into the midst of the party before I could check and turn my horse, or draw a weapon to defend myself. One of the men seized my bridle rein near the bit and clung on, while the others presented their pistols and commanded me to yield. Resistance was folly unless I was tired of living—and I had more cause for wanting to live now than ever before—so I submitted with the best grace possible, which was poor enough. I was at once deprived of my pistols, but my sword was not taken from me.

At the first onset I had recognized Vawter as one of my captors, and the face of the man who seemed to be the leader among them had a familiar look. Like a flash it came to me that this was the man of Colonel Mandrell's house—he of

the stubby mustache and the manner of a sergeant of police—the renowned Captain Bracken himself. That there was no mistake about it was proved when he presently addressed me.

“I am glad to see you again, Captain Trenham—for I understand that you have achieved such a distinction since our last meeting,” said he, in high good humor.

“I can not say as much of you, sir,” I retorted savagely.

Bracken laughed. “You are excused, under the circumstances, from returning the compliment,” he said. “A considerable indebtedness is owing to this gentleman”—indicating Vawter—“for your company this morning, Captain, though the debt should be reduced by half because of the devil of a wait we have had, expecting every minute to have some of your fellows down upon us. It will take many a mile out of this to make me feel right and drive the chills from my back.”

What was intended for a tantalizing smile disfigured Vawter’s face as he looked at me.

“The captain no doubt found excellent entertainment where he was,” he said with an insinuating smirk that made my blood boil; but I said nothing, feeling that I could not trust myself to make a rejoinder.

Bracken gave the word to move on, and the party started toward the south, two men besides the leader and Vawter, riding in front, and two

more, completing the number, bringing up the rear. In a short time we reached a road running to the right, and into it we turned, excepting Vawter, who went straight ahead as if his part of the work had been accomplished. We had traveled the westerly road several minutes at a rapid pace when it seemed to occur to Bracken to hold further conversation with me; he dropped back and thudded along by my side, checking the pace in order that he might talk more at his ease.

"I really don't know that there is anything against you, Captain, other than being a rebel," he began. "When you fell into my hands at Louisville—the time you gave me the slip, you remember—you had entered a trap that was not baited for you, and I detained you, or rather it was my purpose to detain you, on suspicion. And now, as I do not want to return empty-handed and can't very well take along a dead man, I jumped at the chance that fellow gave me to get you. It was a slim chance, though, for you might have taken some other road."

I had already condemned myself for not taking another road, but I cast the subject from my mind as vain punishment. What struck me sharply was the other's belief that Roger Bellray was really dead, and I wondered what purpose Vawter could have in withholding the truth. Let it be what it might, I put that one thing to his credit.

"Why do you take me?" I asked.

"It is always in order to capture the enemy, especially when he is one of Morgan's men, who make no end of trouble and are as slippery as eels," Bracken answered, easily. "Besides, I have never forgotten how you fooled me that other time, and I don't quite understand yet how you did it. You no doubt think I should have let you take your chances with the legionaries and that I have gone out of my line of service, but I am glad to have something to show for two days of hellishly disagreeable work."

"But I will certainly be exchanged soon, at any rate; is it not so?"

"No, I think not; you see our folks got so many rebs when Pemberton surrendered Vicksburg and when Lee got licked at Gettysburg that the government will be compelled to suspend the cartel providing for exchanges. Quite likely you'll not get out till the war is over."

This was very gloomy news, but if a military prison was to be my fate I must of necessity bear it. Yet my mind, which had already been busy with thoughts of escape, must be kept wide awake to any opportunity that might offer to such end. I determined that for the present it would be best to appear to accept my misfortune in good spirit.

"That is a hard situation for an active man to face," I said, "but if it comes to me I will try to endure it. By the way, how does it come that you let Vawter go back to General Morgan?"

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"Vawter? His name is Vawter, is it? Well, he may be useful to the General," and he laughed.

"Or to his Unionist employers," I added, to which observation the other made no reply save by a shrug of his muscular shoulders. Seeing that he was disinclined to continue the subject I let it drop without further comment.

Up to this time I had given no particular attention to any of the party excepting the two principals. I had seen enough of the two men in front to know that they were entire strangers to me, and I now turned to look at the remaining two, trailing a hundred feet or more behind. One of them was unknown, but I was astonished to see that the other was the horse-buyer, whose features I had overlooked in the excitement attending my capture. Without intimating that I recognized the man, I asked Captain Bracken, who seemed inclined to be talkative in non-essentials:

"Who is the man behind, to the left?"

Bracken glanced backward. "That is a great coward and blunderer," he answered, a frown settling on his face. "His name is Spilker, or some such thing as that."

"Why do you say he is a coward and blunderer?"

"Because there are times when it is actually a pleasure to speak the truth. That fellow disobeyed my orders and killed the man I wanted to arrest. Now he's afraid to stay and face the

music; swears the man's friends will hunt him out and kill him. And I have no doubt they would, but it would be small loss."

He spoke coolly and with an entire lack of feeling, beyond disappointment at his failure to get the man.

"Does he belong to your party?"

"Him? Not much; he belonged to a small company of what he called independent homeguards who mostly deserted him after he killed the man, and I believe wouldn't have much to do with him before. I am merely giving him a chance to get out of the country."

"Who was the man that was killed?" I asked, for his blunt way of answering my questions interested me.

The captain evidently believed that he had said enough, for instead of making any response he put spurs to his horse and resumed his place in front. When a half hour afterward the distant report of a cannon was heard over Corydon way he turned in his saddle and shouted back at me:

"Your friends are beginning operations early this morning."

"So it seems," said I. For the first time that sound saddened me, and struck upon my ears more as a knell than as a gage of battle.

An hour's ride from the Mauckport road brought our party to the Ohio river somewhat to the north

of the village of New Amsterdam. At this point the great water-course runs to the north for a distance of several miles, then strikes off to the northwest, passing the river town of Leavenworth, and shortly beyond that makes a sharp bend and abruptly turns back upon itself, flowing southeastward many miles before it resumes its general course toward the mighty Mississippi.

Thus a sharp Kentucky peninsula, in shape like a gigantic thumb, was created by the boundary makers and sandwiched between two Indiana shore lines. Half way between the two towns mentioned, on the northern side, was an obscure and little used landing, where steamboats, passing up or down the river, would stop for passengers or freight only on being signaled to do so. For some reason Captain Bracken preferred this landing to the more public stopping places, and our small cavalcade headed northward, following the stream as closely as was possible.

Whether the news of the invasion had frightened the inhabitants of the region away, or whether other causes kept them out of sight, could not be told. But certain it is that the few houses which we passed showed no signs of human occupancy. Here and there a dog had run out and barked at our heels, but his master's presence was not disclosed. Domestic fowls cackled and quacked about the door-yards, and cows, unmilked and discontented, were heard mooing at

pasture bars, but neither housewife nor milkmaid nor barefoot urchin came into view.

I noted the difference between this condition and that which existed in the country further north as I passed through it earlier in the morning. These people had surely fled the day before and had not yet returned, while the voices heard through the matin fog were, as I had already concluded, of those actually deserting or making early and hurried preparations to desert their homes before the onward march of my General.

But these things occupied less of my thoughts than did plans for escaping from my captors, chances to do which had so far seemed slim and discouraging. Bracken's statement about the suspension of exchanges filled me with dismay. It meant confinement, possibly, as he had said, until the close of the war, even if I should be compelled to face no more serious charge than that of being a soldier of the enemy. Except for this disheartening prospect, and a feeling of chagrin that I had stumbled so readily into the net that Vawter had spread for me, I was not sorry to be relieved from any participation in the morning's work, of which that thunder of the cannon had given warning.

Our progress was made slow by the rough nature of the country we were traversing, but by eight o'clock we had reached a bluff overlooking the landing. Here we drew rein and scanned the

river. No boats were plying its waters in the immediate vicinity, but the smoke of steamers was distinctly visible toward Leavenworth. Whether they were going down or coming up the stream was for a time doubtful.

Presently, however, we made out that a white-hulled little vessel was coming fussily our way, with much churning of the water and a display of smoke out of all proportion to the size of the craft. Captain Bracken brought forth from somewhere a small glass and after leveling it on the boat appeared to be greatly pleased with the result of his inspection.

"We are in luck; that is a Louisville packet, and it seems to be in a nasty hurry, too," he said, lowering the glass. "Now, how do we get down to that accursed landing?"

He looked about him for the road and discovered it winding down from the heights more than half a mile away. Its distance put him in something of a temper.

"Damnation! If we go that way we'll miss the boat. Here, Spiker," he called out to the fugitive. "You ought to know this place, and are interested in getting away from it. How can we get down without going the road?"

"My name is not Spiker," said the horse-buyer, with a flash of spirit.

"Who cares what it is? Catch that boat for us

and I'll willingly call you Napoleon Bonaparte or anything you choose."

"I've never tried it," said Spelker, sullenly, "but I know a place where I think it can be done," and he started off, the rest of us following.

Soon he stopped at a point almost opposite the coveted landing—coveted by the others, not by me—where there was a break in the limestone bluff constituting a steep, irregular ravine, through which, in wet seasons, surface water no doubt found its way to the river. Judging from signs, a considerable torrent more than once had rushed and roared between these jagged walls, but at this time the gorge was perfectly dry. It seemingly was no great undertaking for men on foot to attempt a descent here, but it was not so with horses, being for a part of the way uneven and in places almost precipitous.

A third of the way down the stone walls fell away, and a little further on was what appeared to be a rumpled bank of earth evidently caused by washings from the high ground. At that point the occasional torrent was turned to the right by this obstruction, running in a narrow channel between overhanging ledges of rock on one side and the dangerous-looking bank of clay on the other. What was beyond that I could not see. I have been thus particular in description because of the extraordinary thing that happened to me there.

"Here we are," said Spelker. "Once through that cut down there and it will be smooth enough."

Bracken surveyed the ground dubiously, but he was in a hurry and apparently resolved to risk breaking all of our necks and those of the horses as well rather than to miss the packet. Ordering everybody to dismount, he put all the animals except Spelker's in charge of two of the men and started them down the gorge; Spelker was expected to look after his own horse.

"You are next, Mr. Spiker, and Captain Trenham will follow you," said Bracken, who with one of his men, was to come behind.

In that order the start was made. The men with the horses had almost reached the turn when we began our descent, and soon disappeared. On getting to the turn I saw them making good progress ahead of us where the channel seemed to end on a gently sloping plateau. Captain Bracken and the others were stumbling along as much as thirty feet behind me.

Spelker and I had made the turn, I close upon his heels, and gone some yards, when suddenly his horse, which he was leading by the bit, gave a snort of fright and with a bound broke away from him. Instantly the earth seemed to open under his feet, and he went downward and out of sight. I had no time to take a step backward or even to utter a cry before I also went down. Then came a crushing, thunderous noise above.

The fall was not to a great depth, and was deadened by the earth that had given way under me.

On striking, I felt a shower of earth and gravel falling upon and around me, and then had a momentary sensation of trying to balance my body and failing. I rolled to one side, and over and over down a smooth incline for a distance that seemed unending until I reached another level that enabled me to stop my uncomfortable flight. A rattling noise as of pebbles bounding along a hard surface had accompanied me to the bottom, and they still came down as I rose to my feet, bruised, half-stunned, but not seriously injured.

I was in pitch blackness, and could only tell the direction from which I had come by the occasional falling of the pebbles, and by hearing far above the awful creeping and sifting sound of settling earth. Feeling my way cautiously to the foot of the incline I looked upward, but no ray of light greeted my eyes. I stepped upon something soft, and putting my hand down found that it was a hat, still warm from the head of the wearer. I put it on.

Where was Spelker? I spoke the man's name but there was no answer save the echo of my own voice, which repeated and reiterated the name from hollow, immeasurable distances. Sitting down on the stony floor I rested for a little time, and then on my hands and knees began to ascend the incline. The work was slow and ex-

hausting. In places where water had seeped through from above the stones were slimy with the drip, and afforded no hold either for hand or foot. Many times I slipped back a part of the way, but finding a drier spot would go on again.

At last I reached a ledge barely wide enough to give me comfortable sitting room. Drawing myself up on this that I might recover the breath which my labors had well-nigh deprived me of, I realized that it was here where I had first fallen. But now, save where I sat, the place was heaped with earth and rock. Getting carefully to my feet and feeling about me, I found that the opening had been closed by the falling of great masses of limestone, crowded and wedged tightly together, with every crack and crevice filled with soil and sand.

Through that terrible pile no sound from the outer world could penetrate. What folly to try the strength of my voice against that entombing heap! I judged that a part of the wall of the gorge had been loosened by the washing storms of centuries, and upon the yielding of the cavern's mouth had tumbled down its countless tons to hide the secret over which it had so long stood guard.

I again seated myself on the ledge to consider my situation. And then I remembered that before leaving my mother's house, she had, along with other small articles, provided me with a box of

matches, which I had put in my coat pocket. I began a search for these, suddenly fearful that I had lost them, but they were still secure. Lighting one I looked around as far as its blaze enabled me. Nothing that I had not previously discovered was revealed—but hold! Just as it flickered out something flashed a little further along the ledge.

Moving toward the spot, I struck another match, and there, in the circle of light made by its small flame, lay a large, muscular human hand, with a gaudy ring on one of its stiffening fingers. Tons of stone and earth concealed the arm and body to which that hand belonged, but I knew that it was Spelker's.

A shudder passed through me, and I became faint and dizzy. What had saved my life? Spelker had fallen first, and in the natural order of things it seemed that I, and not the other, would have been crushed under that mighty weight. Only the providence which had thrown me over the ledge and sent me rolling down the incline in the very nick of time had saved me from the horrible fate that had overtaken the horse-buyer.

I had seen many men killed and maimed in battle, but that was in the open air, with the sky above and the fever of conflict rioting in my veins, and with life and motion as well as death everywhere about. Here I was alone, in darkness as absolute and stillness as complete as that of the

grave, and shut off from everything human save that ghastly hand, which seemed to reach out to me for help that I could not give.

What wonder then, that, strong as I was, and brave as I held myself to be, for a little time I was like one undone. But at last I pulled myself together and set to work to determine the extent of my difficulties. It was not worth while to make further investigation where I was. If there was another way by which I could regain the outer world, it must be found before death or madness robbed me of the power of trying.

Feeling around, my hand came into contact with a large tuft of dry grass that had fallen from the surface. Applying a match to this, a light was made that revealed a slightly arching roof eight or ten feet above my head and extending out over the blackness below. The incline I judged to be as much as twenty feet wide, with natural stone walls on each side.

What surprised me greatly, at the same time giving me a feeling of hope, was to see, next to the wall on my right, a regular flight of steps leading downward, and apparently cut into the solid rock. Moving nearer, my astonishment was increased, for this could be no accidental stairway. It was designed by human brains and worked out by human hands. But when were these brains active and when had these hands chiseled and wrought? Everything served to

show that it must have been ages upon ages before.

The steps were worn as if by the long-continued passage of feet through unnumbered centuries, and the wall, at the height of four or five feet from each step, was smooth, as if here human hands had been put to steady the descent of those who had made use of the regions below. Either the stairway had been used moderately for thousands of years, or else mighty and unremittent hosts for a lesser period had gone down this stony way and up again.

I had barely time to observe these things—which I did in a small fraction of the time taken to relate them—when the grass burned out to the last root and left me again in the darkness. Following the steps downward, counting them as I went, and steadying myself against the wall, I at last reached the level bottom where I had stood before. There were eighty-six steps, each of them apparently nearly a foot high, but the declination was so gradual as to make my descent comparatively easy.

What was now before me? What lay beyond this silent pall that covered me? I struck a match and held it out at arm's length when I had reached what, to the touch of my feet, appeared to be the end of the flight. The wall against which I stood terminated a few feet further on, but, except that and the smooth

ground extending about me, the feeble rays disclosed nothing. If I could not find a substantial light I might as well stay where I was and let that be the end of it. What had the former occupants used? In the hope that they might have left behind something that would serve me, I moved to the edge of the wall and lighted another match, holding it toward the floor.

To my inexpressible joy I saw a heap of twisted canes a yard or so beyond the angle of the wall, and near by were some bunches which were partly burned at one end, showing the use to which they had been put. Picking up one of these I soon had a brilliant blaze that illumined the cavern for many yards in all directions. The first thing I did was to examine my treasure, which just then was greater to me than tons of gold.

Each torch was about three feet long, and the sticks of cane of which it was composed were so wrapped and twisted together as to best fit them for the purpose for which they were designed. I observed that the torch in my hand, while giving a fine light, was consumed very slowly. I had never seen this species of cane, which was strongly resinous, and concluded that, like those who had brought it here, it was extinct in the locality, or, what was more likely, that it had been transported from another, and probably far distant place.

CHAPTER XIV

THROUGH THE TUNNELS

WITH a torch in each hand and another one lighted and left propped against the wall near the stairway, I started to explore my immediate surroundings. The floor on which I trod was hard and smooth; the roof was at least seventy feet above me, and the chamber itself, almost circular in form, was more than one hundred yards in diameter. The air was cool and pure.

So vast were the proportions of the room that, if it had been under the hills of Granada, it might, according to Moorish legend, have held Boabdil and his sleeping host. And what of those other mighty throngs who had filled it with life and sound? From whence had they come and whither had they departed? What scenes had these somber and voiceless walls witnessed, what sounds had broken upon this eternal and earless rock? To what tongue had the encrystalled dome given echo?

In what seemed to be the exact center of the chamber stood an immense earthenware cauldron, or bowl, at least ten feet high and twelve across at

the top and flat on the floor. On the side toward the entrance was a series of stone steps reaching to within three feet of its rim. Going up the steps I found that it was covered with a lid that fitted tightly into the wide, grooved inner edge of its rim. The lid was rounded and elevated in the middle. What was within this tremendous utensil? What secret was here held and guarded? Unmindful for the moment that I was apparently entombed in a more colossal receptacle, of somewhat similar but vastly more durable structure, I forgot my peril and became eager to see what had been here so carefully hidden.

An inspection of the lid disclosed a series of rings running around it, beginning a foot from the edge and maintaining that distance apart to the top. Looking closely at these marks, I saw that the covering of the bowl was not made in one piece, as had at first seemed to be the fact, but in many circular pieces, fitting snugly into each other and set in cement that crumbled under the blade of my pocket knife. The piece capping the center of the lid was about two feet in diameter, and if it should be removed the inside of the vessel would be at the mercy of my eyes.

Drawing myself up, I crawled on my hands and knees to the rounded, knob-like apex, which gave me leverage. Laying aside my torches, I took hold of the knob with both hands, and ex-

erting all of my strength succeeded in raising it a little. Resting a few minutes, I tried again and this time lifted the center piece from the groove in which it was set, and moved it aside.

For a while I lacked the courage to look into the blackness below, but not long did I hesitate. Taking up the torches, I leaned over and thrust one of them through the opening and there held it. The whole of the interior was lighted up and a low, involuntary ejaculation of amazement escaped me as the golden mass, heaped almost to my hand, glittered in the flickering torch-light.

Withdrawing the torch, I thrust in my hand and pulled it out full of the perfect, shelled grains of maize, as fresh apparently as when first stored in that secure granary. Here, no doubt, was kept the seed corn of that far-back people who had frequented this mighty chamber. About it they had held their harvest festivals and dances. With what shouts and laughter had each husbandman climbed to the top and poured in or taken out his allotted share in harvest and seed time! Or if this conjecture be not admitted, was it here, in this natural temple, that, driven to some sudden migration, they had deposited and secured this grain with the hope of some day returning to reclaim it and take up again their agricultural pursuits? What language did they speak, of what appearance were they in form and face, after what pattern was their dress fashioned?

It does not matter; they were of peaceful and simple pursuits, and reckoned these yellow grains as more precious than gold. Whence did they go on that last journey? What transpired to detain them? Whither did they finally vanish?

Though it involved some expenditure of strength, of which I might have need before I was freed from my extraordinary imprisonment—if, indeed, I should be so fortunate as to attain that result—I replaced the section of the lid that I had removed. A great respect for the strange people whose treasure this had been possessed me, and it seemed to me that a neglect to do this simple thing would have been a species of sacrilege.

Regaining the floor of the cavern I looked at my watch and found that it was past ten o'clock. I took the precaution to wind the time-piece before putting it back into my pocket, though day and night were the same here, and the hours ticked off by it were frivolous things compared with the thousands of years marked by the great urn beside me.

Determined to waste no more time, I began to make a diligent search of the walls for an opening. I knew enough about caves in such formations as were here shown to think that this immense chamber was probably connected with others, though it was inconceivable that I should find another so vast. The only known entrance

to the now celebrated Wyandotte cave, then but little explored but since shown to be of wonderful extent and beauty, was seven miles away. If there should be connection between the two I might be able to make my way out, even if no other opening should be found.

Beginning at the stairway, I followed the wall without result until I came to a point almost opposite, where there was a break in the limestone several feet wide. From here a passage led. Without stopping then to investigate its character, I went on until the circumference of the room was completed and discovered no other. Then selecting from the heap of torches as many as I could conveniently carry, I made them into a bundle and tied them with one of my suspenders. Thus equipped, I started on a pilgrimage the end of which could not even be guessed.

Crossing the cavern floor, past the great lidded bowl, I found the passage on the other side and plunged into it. Its floor was smooth and hard like that of the great chamber, and, like it, bore testimony to the wear and pressure of human feet. For a distance that I judged to be a furlong or more it ran straight and true, but widened a little. Here it opened into another chamber almost as large as the one I had quitted.

It was empty, save that in the center there stood what appeared to be an altar made of blocks of stone. Ashes were upon its top, and to-

ward the margins were pieces of wood, with charred ends. What kind of rites were here observed? Were human beings sacrificed here to propitiate some unknown god? Were captured enemies slain here to celebrate a victory or to avenge a wrong? Was it here that the transgressor was brought to expiate his sins in the flame? Or was this merely a place to which the innocent dead were brought for sacred incrimination? Raking in the ashes with one of the sticks, I discovered nothing that would throw any light on these inquiries. At the side of this chamber, at the mouth of what seemed to be a passage-way, but which proved to be a small, natural chamber, was a quantity of wood. Some distance from this was another small chamber, a trifle larger than the first, which might have been a retiring room for the priests.

Only a few minutes were devoted by me to these things; a few more spent in examining the walls of the main chamber showed that there were two passages close together running from it. Choosing the larger one at a hazard, I pursued my way. This passage wound in and out, and in places was a mere tortuous path, scarcely large enough to give walking room.

For an hour I stumbled through it, and at last, tired and covered with a cold perspiration, came out into an immense arcade of great height and unknown length. A roaring sound, somewhat

resembling continuous thunder subdued by distance, greeted my ears.

As I went along I saw the bed of an ancient water-course, its bottom covered with fine yellow sand. The worn surfaces of its sides showed that at one time a considerable stream had flowed between them, but they were now entirely dry. The sight reminded me that I was thirsty and I pushed on, following the bank. The roaring sound increased as I advanced. In that subterranean depth the noise, rapidly becoming more distinctly thunderous, was less terrifying than the awful stillness through which I had thus far journeyed.

I had probably walked almost a mile along the margin of the vanished river when something white and high flashed in the rays of my torch. It was water tumbling over a ledge fifty feet above where I stood. Going as near as I dared I saw that the stream fell into a seething pit far below, where it bubbled and foamed and hissed before disappearing into still lower depths.

The falling water had seemingly broken through its original bed and found here a new and sub-cavernous channel. With some difficulty and danger I got into a position where I could reach the edge of the pouring torrent. Removing my hat I held it out to catch some of the water, but as it came before my eyes it dropped from my relaxing fingers into the hammering flood beneath.

The hat was not mine; it was the dead horse-buyer's. I drew back for a moment to steady myself, but quickly recovering from the shock, I laid my torch on the rock, and, making a cup of my two hands, drank my fill of the cold water.

Then I did something extraordinary. I had for hours felt a desire to speak, but that echo, which, when I had called Spelker, sent the latter's name back to me with horrible iteration, had restrained all succeeding impulses to use my voice. Now, however, the thunder of this waterfall in my ears, I opened my mouth and shouted and sang. Not a word of it all did I hear, but that made no difference; if I had heard, I would not have sung or shouted.

Greatly refreshed, and with a sense of relief inconceivable to one in any other situation, I moved away from the fall and turned my attention to my further progress, which might end in freedom or in a still more obscure tomb in far distant recesses. I did not suffer myself to think of the latter alternative, but in spite of my will that result forced itself into my mind from time to time as the more probable. My only hope was that I had so far followed unexplored portions of the Wyandotte cave, and that I should be able to find the mouth of the latter or possibly some hitherto undiscovered exit. It was not possible to do more than conjecture as to the direction in which I had

traveled. At the start I felt faintly assured that I was going northward, but after leaving the place of the altar I had completely abandoned even that uncertain consolation.

Looking about me, I saw that the arcade ended abruptly against the high masses of stone over which the stream dashed into the abyss. My eyes finally fell on what appeared to be a mere cleft in the rock in the angle of the two walls. For a time I hesitated whether to venture into it or to go back and search for some other opening, many of which might have been passed without observation while following the dry water-course.

Casting doubt aside I stepped into the cleft. At the point of entrance it was hardly three feet wide, and its rough walls seemed to crowd me and throw me from one to the other in a grim game of battledore, myself as the human shuttlecock. I had felt the same sensation in other places and was now a little used to it; nevertheless, I was disturbed when the fissure began to narrow. Presently I came to a place where, standing still to test its width, my shoulders touched both walls. From here on I was forced to move sideways, dragging my bunch of torches behind me, and progress was slow and infinitely tiring. I had not eaten nor slept—for how long I did not dare to think—and had passed through experiences which would have been trying enough to a man fresh and unwearied.

And what wonder is it that I felt my strength leaving me and that something between terror and despair possessed me? I could not sit down and rest; if I should lie down in this terrible place I might never rise; if I should go back I might not find another passage save that by which I had entered the great arcade. I must go on while it were possible. After a while the passage again ended abruptly against the solid rock. Moving back a little way, I threw my light up and down the face of the obstruction and found that it did not extend entirely to the ground. At the bottom the passage continued its way but was reduced in height to three feet.

Lifting the bundle of unused torches over my head, I brought it in front and kicked it with my foot into the opening; then throwing myself at full length on the bottom, I poked my light into the hole and dragged my body after it. I proceeded thus probably twenty feet, when, upon pushing the bundle ahead of me, it suddenly left my hand and fell from sight, making a loud, hollow, clattering noise as it came in contact with some obstruction below.

The character of the noise indicated that another chamber had been reached, and my feelings underwent a sudden and agreeable revulsion. Quickly drawing myself to the verge over which the torches fell, a sight greeted my eyes that for a while made me doubt my senses. I was look-

ing into what seemed to be thickly falling snow. The air was filled with glittering flakes, and if the time had been in winter instead of in the hot month of July, I would have believed that I had at last reached the outer world, and would have shouted for joy.

But what was this ghostly stuff that came down from an unknown firmament, filling the gloom with its grace and beauty? Pulling one of the sticks of cane out of my torch I dropped it, all aflame, below me. It lit up the ground, which was not more than six feet distant, and I followed it with my body. I felt that I could breathe again, for here at least was room, and I sat down on the bundle to rest.

The spectral snow was still falling, but in lessened quantity, and putting out my hand I gathered some of the flakes in my palm. They were only crystals of the sulphate of magnesia, which the concussion of the air produced by the falling canes had shaken from the drifts with which the ceiling of the chamber was covered. The room, I discovered, when, having rested a few minutes, I had explored it, was not more than a hundred feet long by fifty or sixty wide, but it was of wonderful beauty. It was a veritable crystalline garden, and the cave flowers, in clusters, in garlands and rosettes, with which it was so lavishly adorned, gleamed and flashed on every hand.

A wide, arched avenue led from this chamber

into another two or three furlongs away, more irregular in outline but larger and more lofty. Its dome was supported by massive columns. Magnificent stalactites hung from its ceiling and draped its walls with fantastic tapestry. This chamber was only one of many of varying shapes and proportions which, within the ensuing hours, passed in review before my wearied but observant eyes. Enormous stalactites, like great cones of ice, made resplendent the vaulted roofs; gigantic stalagmites stood about, like cyclopean sentinels, all adrip; efflorescent crystals and pillars of alabaster flashed across my vision until I was surfeited even with their surpassing beauty.

During this portion of my journey I found little difficulty in threading the passages that opened out before me. They were so numerous that my only trouble was in choosing between them, and this I did, of necessity, at a venture, trusting to providence to guide my aching feet.

At last I came to a room of considerable size from which led a solitary passage. I had followed this for a distance that I judged to be a quarter of a mile, when I observed that it was tending downward. The fall at first was slight, but it gradually became more and more sloping as I advanced. After awhile I got to a point where the fissure—for such it seemed to be—suddenly widened.

Before I could scrutinize my surroundings my

feet slipped from under me and I slid down a smooth incline, fetching up against a dry wall at the bottom. No harm was done by the unpremeditated coasting, but I was alarmed on noticing that the fissure ended there. At one side there was a well-like opening above me; with that exception there was no exit save that by which I had come. Reasoning that as the other chambers through which I had passed were seemingly on the same level the shaft might lead to another, I examined its walls and determined that it was possible to climb them. The hole was less than a yard in diameter and numerous projecting stones furnished tolerable footholds.

Stringing my bundle of torches—now considerably reduced in size—on my back, I began the ascent. I made even better headway than I had at first thought possible, for the shaft soon became spiral, thus lessening the danger in falling if I should lose my hold. To a man fresh and vigorous from rest and refreshment the work would have been laborious; to me it was a struggle. Toward what proved to be the end, the shaft again became vertical and narrowed to a mere crack where the stones had been wrenched asunder in some mighty convulsion. I had to cast about for openings large enough to admit my body, and picked my way through spear-like points that tore my clothes and flesh.

All things must end, and this painful experi-

ence was no exception to the rule. After many minutes of alternate climbing, creeping and resting, I got to a place where there were no more stony teeth to pierce me and no walls within the reach of my hands. Throwing myself over the brink of this terrible crevice, I lay panting and exhausted on the cool floor of a room so small that, from where I lay, the whole of it was lighted by the single torch in my hand. It was, in truth, but the mere widening of a passage, along the arching roof of which, ten feet above my head, ran a continuation of the fissure through which I had just passed.

For a long time I rested thus, and then, pursuing my way and making many turnings in and out, and up and down, and at last crawling through a hole barely large enough to allow me to proceed, I presently emerged into a part of the cavern where the dome-like roof lifted up, and up, to a height far beyond the reach of the rays of the fresh torch that I brought into use.

But what was this mountainous mass piercing the blackness above me? I began to shake as with a fit of the ague, and tremblingly, and with a haste born of a sudden great hope, I detached and lighted another torch from my bundle and held the two aloft in my unsteady hands.

"Thank God!" I cried aloud.

It was the first time I had spoken since I sat beside the falling river. A subterranean moun-

tain towered above to a height of nearly one hundred and fifty feet, and yet I knew that the dome of this immense chamber was still fifty feet above that. I was in a known part of the great cavern at last, and stood beside the solemn walls of the "Cathedral," where I had stood on a former occasion. Whereas I had begun my underground pilgrimage seven miles in a straight line to the south of the entrance to this stupendous tunnel, I was now more than a mile to the north of it. But what an immeasurably greater distance had I traveled! From here onward I knew the way, and could follow it at my leisure.

The great strain that my situation had put upon me relaxed, and I felt the weakness that my exertions and the lack of food and sleep had produced. Putting my hand in my pocket for my watch to ascertain the time, I found that it was gone. Ah, well, that was a trifle now. I would rest a little and then go on. Seeking a spot near the cavern wall, I lay down and slept.

CHAPTER XV

A DISCREDITED SPY

I WAS awakened by something striking me sharply on the face, and sat up, startled and alert. The light had burned out and I was in total darkness. A great whirring sound filled the impenetrable gloom, and, as I listened, the near flutter of wings and little fanning puffs of air told of the zig-zag flight of the cave bats. I felt that I had slept an hour, but it might have been much more or less than that. So accustomed had I become to irregular hours since being in the field that a little sleep sufficed to refresh me. Excepting an uncomfortable hunger, and a stiffness caused by my bruises, I felt that I was none the worse for my extraordinary adventures.

While preparing to light a fresh torch, my attention was attracted by a perpendicular streak of light that suddenly flashed upon the side of the great underground mountain. Once there, it remained stationary, save for a faintly vibrating motion observable at its edges. I watched it for several minutes, and then saw it rapidly widen and disappear in a general glow that filled the

part of the cavern on that side of the mountain with a misty yellow light.

Turning my head, I saw through the mist, at a height of twenty feet or more up the cavern's wall, a powerful lantern, which was at once the cause and the center of the display. The lantern was held in a man's hand, and the man, standing in a crevice in the wall which was barely wide enough to give him room, was talking with somebody behind him.

They were too far away for me to understand what was said; but presently a ladder was pushed through edgewise and lowered to the ground, and the man with the lantern came down. He then turned the light upon the ladder, and a second man descended; then another followed and three stood on the floor. Not one of them had spoken since the ladder was lowered. But these were clearly not all who were expected, for the light still rested on the ladder and the three men were looking upward toward the opening. There seemed to be a commotion up there and angry voices, in the midst of which could be distinguished another voice lifted up apparently in appeal.

Finally a man was pushed out and began to back down the rungs of the ladder; a rope was around his neck and the rope reached up to the hands of a stalwart fellow standing in the mouth of the crevice, who was paying it out as the other

descended. When the latter reached the ground the rope was thrown to one of the three who stood ready to receive it.

Other men bearing lanterns then came down—how many I did not know, my eyes being upon the prisoner. That he was a prisoner had been already shown; but the binding of his hands behind his back, which two of the men now proceeded to do, removed any possible doubt. When all had descended, the party moved to the other side of the cavern behind the mountain. I followed and secured a position where, without being myself in danger of discovery, I could both see and hear what was going on.

The prisoner was seated on a fallen stalactite near the wall, partly in the shadow, but soon one of the lights was shifted so that its rays fell upon his face. I started on seeing the pale countenance of Dallas Vawter as he looked in a dull and hopeless way about him, first at one man and then at another, as if trying to read the fate in store for him. Two of the men had drawn a little apart from the others and were holding a whispered conversation.

All of the men whose faces I could see were unknown to me, but the two leaders I afterward knew to be Griswold and Wysart, who, with the others now about them, were members of one of the numerous companies that the exigencies of their border location had brought together for defense

against marauding bands of outside foes ; also, as it appeared, for protection against any possible uprising at home, rumors of which had been widely circulated. Where had they found Vawter and why had they brought him here? The conversation between the two men was not prolonged and presently they went back to the group around the prisoner. The latter was the first to speak.

"Oak-oun," he said, and repeated it twice in a sort of refrain, as if bewailing an unhappy lot, while his eyes were busy searching the countenances before him.

The men stared at him contemptuously as at a whimpering coward, all except one, who, standing farthest back and unobserved by his companions, suddenly placed one hand on his breast and lifted the other straight in the air, as quickly lowering it, at the same time giving a warning motion of his head. That some sort of understanding was thereby established between the two I did not doubt. Vawter's manner at once seemed to change.

"I hope you have agreed on something pleasant," he said, addressing Griswold in a tone of now sneering bravado. "Make an end of it; you have brought me to this pit of hell, now do your devil's work and do it quickly. I have begged all I shall."

"We have plenty of time," Griswold returned, in a voice as grim and cold as the rock about

him. "We are not sure that we may not give you a chance after all. I don't promise it, and do not say what kind; it depends on you."

"Perhaps," said Vawter, with a grimace, "you will allow me a choice between strangulation and a broken neck."

Griswold looked at him for a moment before answering. "It is not exactly that; it is a choice between certain death and a chance to live."

"Well, go on; I am listening."

"You have been in this country north of the river for two months—just hanging around with no business that we could see. A good many times you've gone to Roger Bellray's house, and Sumber's and Fisher's and others of their kind. From your conduct we thought you were a government agent gathering proofs against suspects. While some of us didn't believe in that way of trapping a man, we likewise did not see fit to meddle with the government's business. To-day you were seen among Morgan's men as bold as brass and as insolent as any swashbuckling thief among his three thousand."

As Vawter listened, his face took on a variety of expressions—surprise, amusement, hope, the first mentioned being given emphasis by a lifting of the head, a half-open mouth and a questioning look in his eyes. If he were acting he did it very well.

"What are you driving at?" he asked impatiently, as the other stopped.

"Just this; instead of being a Unionist agent you are a rebel spy," said Griswold.

"And who in Satan's name are you, and these—these *gentlemen*?" asked the prisoner.

"We're Unionists, and we've got mighty tired of Kentucky spies, horse-thieves and guerrillas."

"Unionists!" exclaimed Vawter; then, assuming an appearance of indignation, he continued: "You are a pretty pack of patriots, indeed; you act more like babies or fools. Of course I was with Morgan's men to-day, but before I was with them I was with Captain Bracken—a man who knows what he is up to, doesn't he? This is a fine turn you have given me. Untie my hands."

"Not so fast," said Griswold, but looking doubtful, while the men about him began to talk among themselves in an unsettled way. "If you are not a rebel spy, what are you?"

"I am what you first thought me—a government agent; none other in fact than one of Captain Bracken's secret service men," Vawter said triumphantly, and then added, as he caught the eyes of the one who had given the signal looking at him suspiciously, "oak-oun, oak-oun." This might mean much or little, but to my ears his voice had in it a ring of appeal as he uttered the word.

Griswold, as well as some of the rest, was clearly wavering, but he asked another question:

"If you are what you claim to be why didn't you say so before instead of resisting us and begging us not to kill you?"

"I might say that I thought it prudent not to reveal my true character unless it became necessary at the last minute to save my life. But to tell the truth I was not certain until just now that you were not Knights of the Acorn. I've been pretty thick with some of them, and I was afraid I had been seen reporting to Captain Bracken."

"So you took us for copperheads?" said Griswold in an offended tone.

"Yes, and you thought I was a spy, guerrilla and horse-thief. I think I have most cause for offense," Vawter answered, laughing. "Here, take off this cursed rope and I'll forgive your blundering—though I'll confess you have given my nerves a shock—and if I can tell you anything that you want to know, consistently with my orders, I am at your service. Come, untie me."

The man was either playing a bold game, for which Griswold had given him an opening, or else he was in earnest. I believed that he was at least partly telling the truth.

Griswold turned to the man with whom he had spoken aside.

"What do you think, Wysart?"

"I think we'd better do now what we'd 'a'

done in the beginning if we hadn't been so sure of our game, and that's search the man," answered Wysart.

Vawter's countenance fell and in spite of himself he turned pale again, a fact that the men were quick to observe.

Wysart thrust his hands in the prisoner's pockets and in a little while brought forth a piece of paper, like a leaf torn from a small memorandum book; holding it in the light of the lanterns, he looked it over and then read aloud to his expectant companions a pass, signed by my General, allowing the bearer to pass his lines, in or out, and bearing date of the night before.

Then turning to Vawter, Wysart said: "Here is proof that you were in General Morgan's confidence; now show us your credentials from Captain Bracken."

"You fools!" cried Vawter, again making a pretense of being very furious. "Do you suppose I would have dared to show myself in the raiders' camp with anything in my possession showing my true character? General Morgan would have had me hanged by the roadside in no time. That writing proves nothing more than I have already admitted—nothing more than you knew before I admitted anything."

Without saying anything in return, Wysart renewed his search of the prisoner's person with greater care but with no result. As he stepped

back his eyes seemed to rest on the peculiar metal buttons on Vawter's coat. In a moment he had taken a knife from his pocket and removing the lower button began twisting at it with the fingers of his two hands.

"Ah! What's this?" he suddenly exclaimed. "Seems to me I've heard of this trick before, and it's a right cute one, too."

The others crowded around so that I could not see, but presently I heard Wysart's voice reading:

"Headquarters, April 15, 1863.

"The bearer is entitled to confidence.

"BRAGG, Maj. Gen."

"Do you still say that you are in the United States secret service?" asked Griswold, when this damning confirmation of his guilt was read.

Vawter felt that the tide was against him, but he said, stoutly: "I do. I got the coat I am wearing in the raiders' camp last night. I never saw it before, never saw or heard of that paper until you found it and read it. My name is not in it; it belongs to somebody else. I did not know that there was anything peculiar about these buttons. For aught that I know there may be a message of some sort in every one of them. You will not believe me, of course, and I don't expect you to. Do what you are going to do and be quick about it."

Saying this much he leaned back against the rough cavern wall and looked at them defiantly.

"It's a waste of time to argue the matter further," said Griswold, soberly. "We have made no mistake; you are all that we suspected and a good deal more, no doubt. It looks very much as if you are a traitor to both sides and that is being about as 'ornery' as a man can get. Yet, in the face of it all, we are disposed to seek information of you on the condition already named. Do you agree."

"May it please you, gentlemen, there is nothing else for me to do," said Vawter. "The situation is your making, and as between the certain death that is promised on the one hand and a chance to live that is not promised on the other, I prefer the latter. Now, good sirs, if you have made an end of your preliminaries, come to the point."

"Very well," said Griswold, quickly. "We want to know about the arms found this afternoon at Bellray's."

Vawter did not speak for a minute or two and seemed to be considering. Seeing his hesitation, Griswold again spoke: "You do not belong in this country, and are a stranger to our quarrels. The people who live hereabout are our neighbors, and though we do not look at some things alike, we do not want to suspect any man wrongfully nor to do any man an injury unless he deserves it.

But we mean to protect ourselves and to stand up for what we believe to be right. If you don't know, say so; if you do know, if you speak at all, in heaven's name speak the truth."

"I know all about it," Vawter answered at last. "And mind you, not as a conspirator, but in pursuance of my duty as an agent of the government."

He stopped again and seemed for a moment to fix his gaze upon the man in the background, who appeared to be very uneasy about something, then he went on: "When Morgan went into camp after crossing the river I was there. I had attached myself to him as a guide, under instructions. That night Captain John Trenham—some of you may know him—superintended the conveyance of the arms to Bellray's house. They were supplied by the rebel government. I know this because I followed him there and came near getting murdered for my pains. The arms were to be used in equipping a lot of Knights of the Acorn for war—an uprising to assist the invasion. The wounding of Bellray in the attempt to arrest him no doubt scared the conspirators and frustrated their immediate plans."

"Who are the men who were to use the arms?"

"That I don't know. Bellray was almost as suspicious of me as you are. It was because I couldn't learn who were conspiring with him that I communicated some days ago to the proper au-

thorities my belief that it was necessary to arrest Bellray—who is the leader of them all—and in that way scare the others. At that time I did not know how near it was to the hour when they were to begin cutting your precious throats. It seems that I would have fared better if I had kept still and let them go ahead, since you are alive to do to me what they were preparing to do to you.”

“Is that all you know about it?” asked Griswold, mildly.

“That’s all—except as to the girl,” answered Vawter, feeling that he had at last made an impression and hoping to strengthen it.

“What girl?”

• “Why, none other than that sister of Bellray’s, of course. She’s in communication with the enemy.”

“Is she a spy?”

“Call it what you will; she is in communication with the enemy. I don’t apply the word ‘spy’ because it doesn’t sound well, as I have learned to-night,” Vawter replied.

“It’s impossible,” said Griswold.

“I don’t believe it,” said Wysart.

Some of the other men spoke to like effect and the prisoner saw that he had overstepped himself.

The two leaders again went aside and talked between themselves for several minutes, while I, who had heard Vawter’s unblushing lies with constantly rising anger, could scarce restrain myself

from leaving my concealment and throttling the rascal where he sat. Mechanically I gripped the handle of my sword until my fingers ached with the pain of it. When the two men came back into the circle of lights, Griswold, as before, was the first to speak.

"Men," he said, "Wysart and I don't take any stock in what this fellow says. You know that it was rumored that John Trenham was with the raiders, and he was watched for, but nobody saw him—"

"I forgot to say," broke in Vawter, "that I assisted Captain Bracken in capturing Trenham at five o'clock this morning, while he was on his way from Bellray's to rejoin his troop, and he is no doubt safe in Louisville long before this."

"This man is talking for his life," said Wysart. "I myself saw him to-day fire at a loyal citizen who refused to surrender his property at the command of one of the raiders. But Griswold thinks, and so do I, that it is better to give him a chance to save his worthless life on the condition that he promises, if he gets out, to leave the country. What do you say?"

The men all said that they were satisfied, and Griswold turned to Vawter and said:

"There are three openings from this place. One of them you can't reach for it is the one we came through; that is the short way out. Another is a small opening; that doesn't lead

out at all. The last is a large passage, and by following it carefully for a mile or so you will get outside. If you choose to stay here long enough somebody may come this way and lead you out. Untie him, Wilson."

Vawter, when his hands were released, got to his feet. The others, leaving him, went to the ladder and began to mount it, each man carrying his lantern.

"Are you going to leave me without a light?" shouted the miserable man, hurrying behind them.

They made him no answer.

"How do you expect me to get out of this hell-hole in the dark?" he screamed after them as they continued to climb upward.

Wysart stopped half-way up the ladder, all the others having preceded him, and looking down, said:

"That is the chance we give you, and it is much better than the other thing."

"At least leave me a pistol," the wretch begged.

"We think you had better not have a pistol, but there is a sword up there that belonged to one of the rebel officers. Do you know how to handle it? If you don't it will serve as a tolerable walking stick."

"I do; better than anything else," he said eagerly, all his bravado gone.

"Well, we don't. I'll drop it down to you."

So saying, Wysart mounted to the opening and the ladder was drawn up. Then holding his light before him so that its rays shone on the upturned, anxious face of the forsaken man, he leaned out and let fall the scabbarded weapon into Vawter's outstretched hands.

"Now good-bye, you knave. If you get out, as I think you will, leave the country. Your skin won't be worth a muskrat's pelt another time, depend on it."

Flinging down this message, Wysart disappeared from the opening, leaving the great "cathedral" in darkness. It seemed to me that just before he departed a strange sound fell from his lips very like that which had been uttered by Vawter, but it was likely in mockery of what he believed to be the other's cowardice, for he laughed rather boisterously immediately afterward.

CHAPTER XVI

THE DUEL IN THE CAVE

WHEN Vawter realized that he was actually abandoned to his fate, he filled the mighty chamber with curses, which he directed against all who were concerned in bringing upon him his present trouble. After a time he ceased his impotent oaths, and I heard him begin to grope cautiously about in search of the outlet of which he had been told. The fellow's character was such as to justify an honest man in withholding sympathy, and I, who was consumed by a righteous wrath, was in a humor to adopt an extreme course. Had it not been for my own experience within the past twenty-four hours I might have left him to his own resources.

As I sat, however, listening to the shuffling steps, and the stumbling, halting progress of Vawter my heart smote me, and I resolved to offer myself as guide. And then, when we were outside, face to face and on an equal footing—then what? I grasped the handle of my sword, and my breath came and went through my gritted teeth. Judging from the faintness of the sounds

now made by Vawter, he had found his way to the opposite side of the mountain. Lighting one of my torches, I followed. The rays from the flaming canes reached a long distance ahead, and before I had proceeded far there was an exclamation, the noise of rapid steps, and Vawter's voice broke out, before he came into my view, saying:

"And so you were just trying my nerves, were you, or are you coming back to finish the job? But whatever you've come for—" and then, turning the mountain's jutting base, he stood within a few feet of one of the last persons he could have expected to see in that place.

"Captain Trenham!" he cried, springing back a step. He had flung away the scabbard and held the naked sword in his hand.

"I am glad you recognize me," said I calmly.

Vawter stood irresolute for several moments, his face working under the influence of the warring emotions of fear, hatred and relief, but of all these that of hatred was the strongest.

"I don't wonder that you had your doubts on that score," he said at last, recovering from his surprise. "If you had a mirror handy you could appreciate the humor of your question. You do not much resemble the well-groomed officer who last night struck me in the face in the presence of his mistress."

"Whether I do or not, I distinctly remember

the circumstance and am willing to give you satisfaction," I returned as quietly as I could under his goading. "But first, as you are not familiar with this place, I offer you the benefit of my light and my knowledge. The trying position in which your friends left you appeals to me."

"Thanks," he said with a snarl. "Save your sympathy for those who will accept it. I want neither it nor your aid."

"As you will," I replied, half making ready to go my way. "I felt it my humane duty to make the offer but I can not compel you to accept it. The passages are difficult but not absolutely impassable, even in the darkness."

"Rather than put myself under any kind of obligation to you I will rot where I am, for I have sworn to myself to kill you soon or late."

His manner suddenly became threatening, for my appearance, I judged, told him that I was weakened by something that had befallen me. Or did he, coward-like, take my conduct as a sign of fear, and look upon the offer of help as being made in an effort to propitiate a dreaded enemy?

"You can kill me as well outside as here," said I, controlling myself by a great effort and speaking without heat, "and have a much better chance for your own safety."

"What is to prevent me from running you through where you stand, and by the aid of your

excellent torch—then mine by the right of conquest—finding my own way?”

“This,” I retorted, striking the hilt of my sword.

“Bah,” he cried, a scornful smile curling his mouth. “You cavalrymen know only how to hack and hew. The cracking of a head from a safe seat on a horse’s back is not the gentlemanly way, and it is not mine. I warn you that in the use of the sword I am your master.”

“I am glad to know that you are skillful.”

“Why should you be glad? Really, sir, you are something of a humorist.”

“Because I should not fight you if you were not,” said I, answering his question and ignoring his fling.

“Oh!” contemptuously. “You take high ground, my captain; or do you offer that as a fair specimen of your wit?”

“There is such a thing as conscience—the information seems to surprise you—and it has created in me an insurmountable prejudice against doing a murder, for that it would be to kill a man who is not able to defend himself.”

“You make a good plea for yourself, but I am not always—particularly now, in your case—troubled by such a flimsy scruple. A man must be prepared to look out for himself; if you are not it is not my fault.”

“Do not misunderstand me,” said I, with

strained seriousness, but feeling my temper rise under his taunts. "I possess some skill myself. Whether it is equal to that of which you boast I do not know, but it is considerable. I am not bragging of it—only putting you in possession of the fact before you assail me."

"You are kind, indeed," he said jeeringly, "but your assertion of excellence amuses rather than frightens me. The only really serious concern of my life has been to master this weapon—a sort of fad, you know. And, by the way, this sword fits nicely to my hand and seems to be of good metal."

Saying which, he stepped back a pace and made several graceful passes and lunges at an imaginary foe to test the blade and incidentally to impress me with his proficiency in its use.

"Come," I said, impatiently; "if you will not accept my guidance, I will leave with you my last extra torch. With it you can follow me and I will wait for you on the outside."

"Pardon me, but since thinking the matter over, I prefer to settle our differences here. The light might be better, but the room is ample, and the temperature delightful. It is, I assure you, too hot for our work in the outer air. Besides, you might not see fit to wait for me, or we might be disturbed. When I leave this place I choose to leave it as quietly as possible. Nobody will know where you are, and my suit for the hand of

the fair Kate may again prosper—aye, it will prosper.”

“Stop!” I exclaimed at this. “You will provoke me too far and I shall forget my good purpose.” But he went on unheedingly, as if determined to affront me beyond endurance:

“She acted very well the other night—for it was acting—when she saw that you were watching, and concluded that the presence of so fierce a warrior as the renowned Captain Trenham might endanger my safety. She was wrong there, of course, but your interruption prevented what would otherwise have been a very tender parting. We will adjust all our affairs here and now.”

“You lying knave,” cried I, hoarse with suppressed fury. “If nothing else will do you, so be it,” and drawing the sword, which more than once I had been on the point of abandoning as cumbersome, I unbuckled my belt and threw the scabbard aside.

Then taking up the last extra torch of canes I lighted it in the blaze of the other and both were stuck into cracks in the stone wall, thus brightly illuminating a space on the cavern’s floor having a diameter more than sufficient for our purpose. These preparations were made without a word being spoken by either. When they were completed, Vawter, who had watched me all the while, as I could see from the corner of my eye—for I did not in the least trust him—coolly re-

moved his hat and coat and put them out of the way. I did likewise with my coat, having no hat.

Then we faced each other in the center of the lighted circle, no mortal eye upon us, no human presence to stay our hands. Vawter's lips curled insolently as he toyed with his weapon, and yet as he looked into my eyes and noted my earnestness I felt that his confidence failed him a little. For a moment only did we gaze at each other, and then throwing himself into position, Vawter cried out:

"Come on, Mr. Cavalryman; begin your hacking."

Instantly our blades flashed and rang as they met. For a few seconds they ground together while each looked into the other's eyes for the sign of attack. Presently the sudden increase of pressure against my sword warned me of a thrust, which followed instantly, but which I easily parried. After that Vawter made feints, lunges and thrusts with great rapidity and skill, but I, being content to let him exhaust himself, met them all with an art which I was vain enough to believe was not inferior to his own. And then, too, I felt that the binding of his arms at the wrists, from which he was not long freed, was at least not to my disadvantage, for without a well-conditioned wrist the highest art may prove of no avail against even a clumsy but bold opponent.

A man ready in defense should be no less ex-

pert in onset, and as I had so far been successful in the first, I hoped, for its moral effect, that Vawter might believe that I would be equally efficient in the latter. A lack of confidence in one's self is worse than overfaith, and since it may be produced as well by discovering an enemy's strength as by knowledge of one's own weakness, I put forth my powers as far as I could without wasting my strength, for I found that I was dealing with no mean antagonist.

When, after the lapse of several minutes, Vawter had tried every stroke and trick in which he was practiced without breaking through my guard, I fancied that he was beginning to be less hopeful of a favorable outcome. Seeming to realize this himself, with a desperation begotten by the too evident failure of his boasted prowess, he fell upon me for a while with renewed vigor, plying his blade in drive and thrust, but still he did not reach. Then, as he rested for a moment, the weapons sliding against each other with a metallic purring sound, I felt that the time had come for me to abandon the defensive attitude that I had thus far maintained.

"Guard yourself, sir," cried I.

"Look to your own skin," he flung back.

For a few seconds more the purring continued, then came a harsher grind of steel, accompanied by a clicking sound as if the hotly throbbing blood of both shook the weapons with every

heart-beat. Vawter, in despairing rage, attempted a villainous foul, but knowing his treacherous character I foresaw the blow, and evaded it.

Immediately, in pursuance of my warning, I became the aggressor, and slipped my blade from one side to the other of my opponent's sword, executing frequent short thrusts and feints with an adeptness that seemed to nettle him, and playing over and under his guard in a way calculated to show him that I was particular where I should touch. My chief purpose, of course, was not that, but was to uncover his parades.

As in attack, now in defense Vawter put forth his utmost skill, exhibiting both a natural and trained dexterity of a high order, and skillfully foiling many of my attempted disengagements; but I kept my arm moving rapidly in the manner that I had been taught by the best master in France, and soon saw in his face signs of distress beneath the scowl that he had worn all along. He at last fell to defending himself mechanically, and appeared to be waiting for the thrust that should settle the contest.

I did not seek his life, for twice had my point found an opening and slightly pricked his body, and once, going over his guard, had flashed beneath his frightened eyes to his very throat and then leaped back again, leaving him shaking and ghastly. But a quick realization of my forbearance bolstered his spirit and restored strength to

his arm, and for a little time he worked with desperation. That he would kill me if he could I was well satisfied, while I did not desire more than his disablement.

I set about to end the combat. Twice I made a serious effort to touch him and failed, whereat he spat out vicious taunts to further disconcert me, which almost made me regret that I had not run him through. Warned by a growing faintness that my long fast was telling upon me, and dreading lest Vawter should see my plight, I summoned to my aid all of my reserve strength and, with set mouth and stern gaze, began pushing my adversary, having a dim, half-bewildered consciousness that the end was near.

For an instant there was light play of the swords, then once more and for the last time a tense grating of steel, then the gleam of a straight blade. With an exclamation of pain Vawter staggered backward, his weapon falling from his relaxed hand to the cavern floor with a loud, resonant clang. His sword arm hung by his side, and blood stained his white sleeve and dripped from his fingers.

"I am at your mercy, sir," he said, reeling, his face very white.

Casting my weapon aside, I threw my arm about my defeated adversary, and supporting him to a seat at the base of the mountain, set to

work to ascertain the character of the wound. A look sufficed to show that my sword had pierced the arm through and through a few inches above the elbow, missing the bone.

"The injury is not serious, Mr. Vawter," I said when the examination was finished.

"For which I thank you; you could just as easily have found my heart."

"I never intended to take your life; what I did was to prevent you from taking mine."

"You are a magnanimous foe, for I would have killed you if I could, as I told you. And I really thought I could, but you surprised me."

I made no response to this frank avowal, and proceeded to bind up the wound as best I could with strips torn from the injured man's shirt. Completing this task, I then conducted him to a near-by spring of which I had knowledge and refreshed him with a drink of the cold water; then removed from both as far as possible the red signs of the conflict. This done, I said:

"I renew my offer to act as your guide from this place. It is impossible that you should again refuse, for you will presently require the attention of a surgeon."

A look of gratitude came into the man's face and for the time obscured its evil lines.

"You are the master," he said; "command and I obey. And, Captain, let me say that I feel that you have done me good by the wholesome

lessons that you have impressed upon me within the past half hour. It may not last, for I have been too long leading a wicked and irresolute life to change all at once. But just now I feel a new kind of impulse and sensations to which heretofore I have been a stranger. I say it may not last, and to-morrow I may be just as eager to cut your throat as I was thirty minutes ago, and follow just as recklessly as in the past the straight road to hell. Somehow I hope these new feelings will last. Will you take my hand?"

I grasped the extended hand and pressed it warmly, though it was not, I will confess, without some thought of the sick devil's resolution to become a monk.

"It is the left one, but that isn't my fault, you know," he said, smiling weakly.

"The other will soon be sound enough," said I, and then continued: "There is no reason why you shouldn't be what you hope; for your own sake try. As for me I bear you no malice." It should not be said that I withheld from a penitent enemy the support of my encouragement.

"I have done you grave injuries."

"I know."

"I have falsely accused you to your old neighbors of doing a dastardly thing."

"I heard it all."

"And I lied about *her*."

"I heard that, too, and—once I thought I would kill you for it."

"I almost wish you had; my life is worthless."

"We will not discuss these things now," I returned. "We must be off."

Without further words the start was made. As we went along he told me how, leaving my General's column late in the afternoon, he turned back, pursuing a course far to the westward of that followed in the morning and intending to reach Leavenworth. He did not feel that it would be safe for him to show himself openly to any of the inhabitants about Corydon, for fear that they had misunderstood him and his part in the day's adventures. Saying which, he laughed mockingly, muttering, "the fools, the idiots," and other uncomplimentary terms from which I concluded that the leopard could not change all of his spots at once.

About nine o'clock he had been set upon by a party of horsemen who, recognizing him, had carried him off into the woods a little distance where they held a council of war, as he phrased it, in which he heard the words "spy" and "arms" and "Bellray's." One or two of the men had, he thought, proposed to hang him at once without the benefit of clergy. But after a little time they had taken him to a hole in the ground where lanterns were produced, and from thence to the place where they had left him.

"I prefer to forget what took place there," he said a little mournfully.

Then he brightened again. "For a while they had me going, and my nerves were a little shaky. But after a time it occurred to me that I had an arrow which I had not shot, and so I sang a short ditty that seemed to meet with the approbation of at least one of the knaves, for he indicated that I had a friend at court. How he happened to be in that company—but then I am sometimes in queer company myself."

An hour's easy progress brought us into the open air which seemed as good and sweet to me as the breath of paradise after my long immurement, and a prayer of thankfulness for God's mercy rose in my heart as I turned my eyes upon the star-studded sky. Extinguishing my torch, we went a little aside and sat down to rest before parting, each to go his way, Vawter toward Leavenworth, a few miles distant, and I—where?

Presently we heard voices, and soon two men, one of them bearing a lantern, emerged from the entrance that we had left a few minutes before. Reaching the outside, the one with the light raised it to put it out, in the act disclosing the faces of the two men.

"It is my friend," whispered Vawter, "and—hell's fire —"

"And Wysart," I added.

It was indeed the man who had given the sign

from the background in response to Vawter's peculiar refrain, and one of the leaders, who, while able, no doubt, and willing to answer also was not in a position to do so with safety. They did not tarry, but made off, and I heard them as they went assuring each other that they had at least done their duty. When they were well out of sight and hearing, my companion, after re-asserting that he was no longer my enemy, also left me, his face so white and drawn with the pain of his wound that I observed it even in the feeble light afforded by the stars, and pitied the rascal, for such he had been and was likely to continue.

He had told me nothing further than I have related, but it was plain enough that he and Wysart and the other, though strangers, were bound by some sort of tie, of which they could make demonstration. The two men had, after leaving their companions, returned to give him aid, so artfully had he thrown in the magic word while pronouncing himself the servant of their enemy. He was in truth a very accomplished knave.

CHAPTER XVII

WORD BY THE REFUGEE

BEING again on top of the ground and not knowing what better to do just then, I set out for my mother's house, intending to remain there if I could until an opportunity offered to get out of the country. There was no reasonable hope of being able to rejoin my command, which would be forced to sweep ahead like a thunder cloud before the breath of the storm behind it. Once at my mother's, I could lie quietly by, and under cover of the following night reach the Ohio and trust to luck to find some means of recrossing into Kentucky.

With these thoughts in my mind I went along until I had covered most of the distance to be traversed, thinking little of my physical state; but now I began to feel faint and weak from the lack of food and the reaction from the strain under which I had labored for so many heart-breaking hours. My feet were heavy as lead, and my limbs moved sluggishly and with difficulty. Coming to a large boulder by the side of the road I sat down upon the ground to rest, my back against

the rock. My mother's home was not far away, and if I did not misjudge the hour I still had ample time to reach it before daylight. Nothing was further from my intention than to allow myself to fall asleep, yet such a misadventure overtook me.

I was awakened by hearing my name called. It was broad daylight, and many horsemen stood in the road a few feet away, all of them wearing the garb of my General's soldiers. What had happened to stop them here? Had they thus early been defeated and scattered?

"In God's name, Trenham, what's the matter with you?" called out a familiar voice, none other than that of Captain Sivad, who had been detached from the main column before we crossed the river, and had not rejoined us at the time that event took place.

He had, it subsequently transpired, himself crossed at Twelve Mile Island, with two troops, which had been reduced to less than fifty men, the number now with him. I did not wonder at his consternation on beholding me, ragged, bare-headed, and woe-begone as I certainly looked. On my part, while my satisfaction was great on seeing him and his men, I felt a sense of mortification at my plight, though there was no need, considering what had led to it.

"There is enough the matter with me, Sivad," I answered, referring to his exclamatory question.

"But the thing I need most urgently is some breakfast, as I have eaten nothing for thirty hours."

Whatever misfortunes these men had suffered, the want of food was not one, and without more ado my needs in this respect were quickly supplied. While I was eating, I recounted enough of my experiences to explain my present situation. Captain Sivad, on his part, having acquired it from the inhabitants, had more recent information than I as to the General's movements, and confided to me his purpose to get out of the country before he was completely destroyed.

It would be the wildest folly, he proclaimed, to attempt to follow the main body of our fellows. In this respect we were of one mind, for nothing was clearer than the fact that we could not now hope to be of any service to our chief, and that an attempt to render any, as the situation now showed itself, would lead to nothing more or less than our own annihilation.

Sivad told me also that he had heard that a large force of mounted Federal soldiers had crossed the river the evening before in pursuit of the General, and that he thought he would lie by for a day until the enemy was out of the neighborhood. As it was, he had traveled most of the night, without a guide and hap-hazard. To this he was put by much harrying and because of

his belief that his position and strength were known, and that the legionaries were concentrating to attack him in such numbers as to leave him small chance to save the poor remnant of his command.

A deep wood lay to the south of the road, and into that we made our way for probably half a mile until we came to a narrow grassy valley between two fair-sized hills. Near the middle of the valley ran a little stream of clear water. It seemed to be an ideal place for our purpose, as the forest was dense and extensive in all directions.

Being myself without a horse, I had waited at the side of the road until all of the men were well into the wood and then started to follow on foot. I had not gone far and was still within the view of persons who might, by chance, pass along the road, when I heard the clatter of hoofs. I dropped instinctively to the ground before turning my eyes in the direction of the sounds. When I did look, I saw two women on horseback in the act of checking their horses while they turned their faces toward where I lay.

To my amazement they proved to be Kate Bellray and Betty West. I knew that they had long been accustomed to early morning rides, but I was greatly surprised to see them at this time in view of the unsettled condition of the country. Just now as they gazed in my direction, if not at

me—for I felt that I could not be seen where I lay—I fancied that they looked startled. From this it was easy to judge that they had either seen me or some of the cavalrymen straggling further on through the trees.

Had I been alone I might have revealed myself and hailed them, disreputable as my appearance was, but as matters were no such thought entered my mind. They did not stop, but only slowed their pace, and this but briefly, for in a moment they turned squarely about and putting whip to their animals went rapidly back in the direction from which they came. This action was sufficient to confirm my already well-founded conjecture that we had been observed. But there was no help for it, nor did it greatly increase my apprehension. I said nothing about it to Sivad, for I could conceive of no way in which the little that the girls had seen was likely to prove harmful to us.

During the day the horses grazed contentedly upon the grass bordering both sides of the stream, and the men, lying about in the shade of the trees, secured the sleep of which they, like myself, greatly stood in need. Not all day, however, were they thus idle. Sivad, about noon, sent three men back to the road, with instruction to bring in some passer-by from whom information might be obtained. Two hours later they reappeared, one of them leading a horse upon which

sat a boy of sixteen or thereabout, while the other two walked behind. He was at once taken before Captain Sivad for questioning, appearing to be very cool and self-possessed, and exhibiting no trace of fear.

"Well, my boy, what is your name?" asked the officer, not unkindly.

"It's Sam Hollen—I don't mind tellin' you as a name won't ha'm nobody."

"Do you live around here?"

"Yes, suh; I wo'k at Mistah Bellray's—been theah since last wintah."

"You don't talk like a Hoosier."

"I ain't suh, I'm f'om Geo'gy," said the boy, looking Sivad calmly in the face. "And I ain't a rebel, like you'ns."

"Oh, I see; you are a refugee," answered the officer smiling. "Well, it's no matter; have you seen any Union soldiers to-day?"

"Hain't seen nothin' else, much, but I've been lookin' mostly fo' a rebel. 'Spect you kin tell me wheah he is. I don' know—mebby it's you"—the latter doubtfully—"no, it's not you, ceh-tainly not you. You ain't Cap'n Trenham, ah you?"

"I am Captain Trenham," said I stepping forward eagerly. "What do you want with me?"

The boy looked me over critically. "It's a little mo' like it, but not what I expected f'om

what she said. Is theah mo' than one Cap'n Trenham?"

There was now a laugh at my expense and Sivad wanted to know what I had been up to, being ignorant, like the others, that I had friends here. I knew that the lad had come from Kate, but for what purpose? She had recognized me, that was clear, but being with Betty had, for some reason, kept the knowledge to herself.

"There is only one Captain Trenham, and I am he," said I quickly. "Speak; what is it?"

He slowly put his hand in his trousers' pocket. "I've got something fo' you—if I hain't lost it. No, heah it is."

There was a crackling of paper in his pocket as his fingers clutched something, and he drew out a small envelope, crumpled and sweat-stained, and passed it to me. There was no address of any kind on the outside. I broke the seal and took out the enclosure, a half sheet of dainty letter paper. This is what I read, evidently written in haste and trepidation:

"I saw you this morning; I can't be mistaken. B— did not see you but she saw the others. I did not see them. Union soldiers going by all morning. B— gave information. I tried to prevent her; we quarreled and she called me a rebel. Oh! Oh! Oh! They will send a large force, no doubt, for B— says there were hundreds. Save yourself and do it quickly if this reaches you, as

I pray it may. I am doing something terrible, but it is for you, *not the others.*''

That was all, no signature, no names, but Kate's distressed face looked out from every word. After reading I took out a match and setting fire to the message watched it until it was consumed, then ground the blackened remnant to dust between my palms. Until now I had remained silent, while Sivad and the men about watched me curiously.

"Let the boy go," said I at last, absently, turning to those who had brought him.

Sivad looked at me, flushing a little. "You forget, Captain Trenham, that I command here," he said, with some irritation.

"Pardon me," I returned, thus recalled to myself.

I took him apart from the others and acquainted him with the character of the information that had come to me, and his soldier spirit was aroused.

"We will take the road. I have already lost two-thirds of the brave fellows who crossed the river with me and can do little with the handful that is left, but that little shall be done."

Being a careful officer, Captain Sivad upon going into camp had posted guards, and these he gave orders to call in, except those in the direction of the highway, who could be taken up as we marched out of the wood. The fact that no alarm had come from them assured us that

there had been delay in sending an expedition against us, but that we should meet our opposers somewhere neither Sivad nor I had the least doubt. The boy who had brought the message, on being further questioned by me while the men were bringing up their horses, said that he had left Bellray's about eleven o'clock, but guessed that he would have started sooner had he not been gone since early morning on another errand.

“Miss Kate wus 'most crazy when I got home, no otha men folks about and Mistah Rogah wo'se than nobody. He was wo'ked up that bad theah's no tellin', seein' the soljah's way off theah, and declarin' the wah wus begun at last. He's cehtainly crazy now, shuah nuff; don't know any mo' wheah I came f'om, when it's only last wintah I run away f'om Geo'gy to keep f'om bein' 'scripted some day, and aftah wanderin' 'round freezin' and sta'vin' 'most to death, he found me in New Albany, and tuk me home with 'im. He's not very strong Union, but said I had no call to fight fo' the rebels ef I didn't b'lieve they wus right. He gimme money to bring mothah no'th, fo' we weah very po', but I hain't had no chance yet. Fathah, he's daid—shot one night last summah, by some of you'ns, I guess, jes' like we'uns shot Mistah Bellray. We ah all a good deal alike, no'th an' south; wheah the

most is, they want to make the res' think jes' like 'em."

He wiped a tear from his eye when he alluded to his family, and then proceeded to deliver the subsequent opinion of human kind with philosophical composure. He had got off the horse and stood holding it by the bridle. Just now came an order to take saddles and he turned and looked at me questioningly.

"Somebody he ah ain't got no hoss," he said.

"How do you know that?" I asked, starting guiltily at his words.

"I don' know much, but I ken see an' count, an' I've counted the hosses an' theah's fo'ty-seven, an' then I counted you'ns an' theah's fo'ty-eight. *She* said if Captain Trenham ain't got no hoss fo' him to tek Prince. He's huh own an' theah ain't none bettah. Ef it's you, suh, that's afoot tek Prince, else I wouldn't dah go back."

I felt my face grow red with embarrassment as I realized that her quick eyes and keen intuition had correctly interpreted my unfortunate state, of which I was myself painfully conscious. Several of the men during the day had offered to surrender their mounts to me, and insisted when I refused, but I could not bring myself to accept such a sacrifice.

A cavalryman without a horse flounders as badly as a fish on land and is almost as helpless.

They had then proposed to go out and "borrow" one from some near-by farmer, but this I would not allow; nor would Sivad consent if I were willing to pursue so summary a method, for to put it on no higher ground our position was desperately precarious and required us to shun observation as far as possible. So it happened that they had to be content with providing me with a hat, an extra one that I could make answer being found somewhere among their furnishings.

And now, if I did not accept the fine animal at my hand, I must abandon my sorely pressed comrades. While I was hesitating the captain came up, already mounted, and with him one of the men, a young fellow with fair hair, who, as I had previously noticed, carried one arm in a sling from a recent wound. It seemed to be a severe injury, for his manner was feverish and he appeared to be in a bad way generally. He had been lying down all day, taking little account of anything going on about him.

"Smith says he can't go any further," said Sivad; "swears that he will tumble at the first gallop, and wants to lie right down here in the woods and stay."

"That's right; I'm done fo' fo' a time, and the's no denyin' it," said Smith, as he tottered off a little way, and stretched himself out on the grass in the shade of a tree.

Captain Sivad looked at the boy, whose eyes, with a strange light in them, had followed the man on the ground. "Here, you runaway from Georgia, will you take care of this man and get him some place where he can have a doctor?"

"Yes, suh, I will, an' I ought to; it's my brothah, Smith Hollen, the only rebel in the family," replied the boy, with trembling voice.

He then walked quickly to the side of the sick man, and kneeling down called his name. The other looked up, a flash of recognition in his eyes.

"Hello, little Bub; ain't you a long way f'om home?" Then reaching up his sound arm he put it across the boy's shoulders, and the latter began to cry. Stout-hearted lads they were, both of them, but human.

I went over and laid my hand on the younger's head and he lifted his face: "Tell her that I thank her," I said.

"Yes, suh; cehtainly."

Thus we left them and the horse Prince, I riding the extra animal that had been ridden by the refugee's brother. We had not proceeded more than half the distance to the road when we heard some shots, and presently one of the pickets came tearing through the timber which on this side was open enough to admit of fair passage to horsemen. By reason of a slight rise in the ground the road was not yet in view and we could not see the cause of his haste, nor did we need. He

approached and reported to the captain the presence of a troop of Federal cavalry and some unmounted legionaries. The latter were entering the wood while the cavalry remained in the road.

"That's not as bad as it might be," said Sivad to me. I was riding with him at the head of his men.

We went flying forward and soon reached the summit of the rise. The legionaries who were scattered about in our front at once opened a feverish fire, which did us no damage as we swept along in open order. A sound of firing coming from the direction of the camp we had left told that the foot soldiers were also marching upon us through the wood. Our voluntary departure had deprived them of the satisfaction of driving us.

The legionaries before us, not knowing our strength and probably believing it to be much greater than it was, after firing another ineffectual round apparently in increased excitement, broke from cover and ran pell-mell toward the road, our fellows hammering after them like mad, jumping logs, dodging low-hanging limbs and performing other feats made necessary by the character of the ground.

Near the road there was less obstruction and we were able to draw together and assume a more regular and efficient formation. But after all, the approaching contest could be little better than a scampering, happy-go-lucky affair on our side,

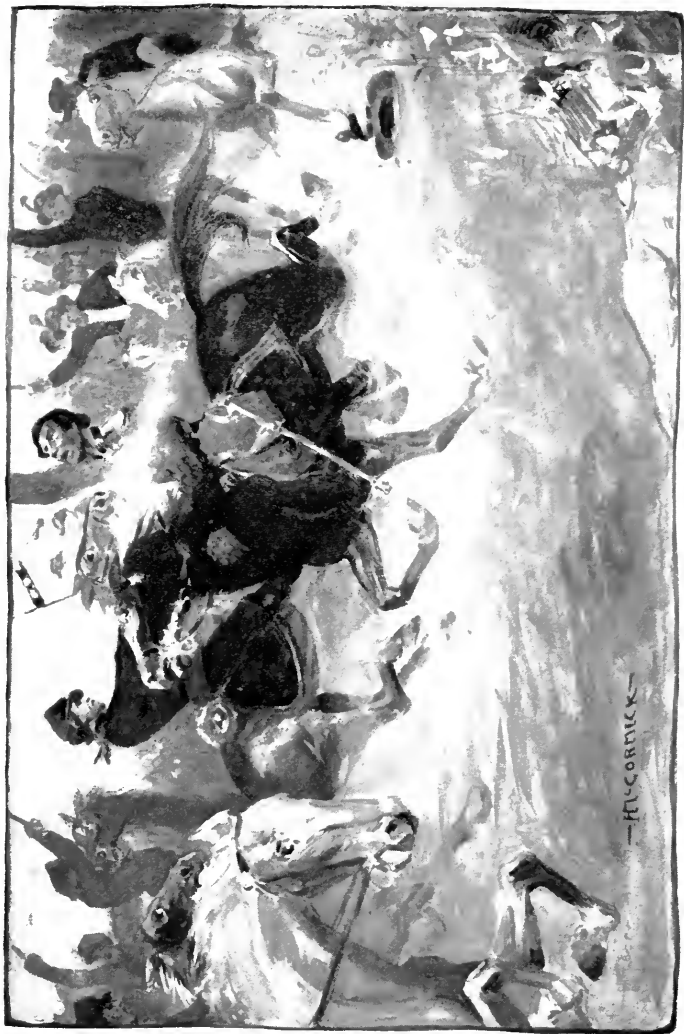
with the chances wofully against us. For we now saw, instead of the single troop standing grimly off to the eastward, ready to pounce upon us as soon as we should clear the wood, another group of horsemen on our left which had hitherto been concealed from us by a row of wild cherry trees. The legionaries, now seeing our feeble numbers and emboldened thereby, stopped and renewed their fire from behind the bank of a ravine on our right.

Captain Sivad, riding at my bridle, looked flushed and anxious. The two troops of Federal cavalry remained motionless in their respective positions, thus holding the road in both directions with a force superior to our own.

“Ah!” cried Sivad, and then he shouted an order to halt that brought us to a stand just at the margin of the road. “They think they have us.”

The firing had ceased and two officers cantered toward us from the eastern troop, one of them bearing a flag of truce. Sivad and I rode out to meet them and they saluted us with great respect. After asking who was in command one of the officers, a lieutenant, as his well-worn uniform proved, demanded our surrender, asserting that we were hopelessly beset.

Without a moment's hesitation or wavering, Sivad refused, bluntly but courteously, declaring that he still had fifty stout men, and that, though



BEFORE THERE WAS TIME TO CALCULATE OUR CHANCES WITH THE FOE BEFORE US, WE STRUCK WITH

the way was blocked, he would take his chances on cutting a path for himself. The interview ended there, and again saluting respectfully, as though we were not at once to begin cutting each other's throats, both parties wheeled about and returned to the head of their respective forces.

Waiting only long enough for the Federal officers to rejoin their troop and report the futility of their errand we swung into the highway, but instead of going to the eastward, we went west, straight toward the bunch of blue-trousered troopers that filled the road to its edges. They got under way with a shout and came on, much more eager for the fray, but not more determined than we, who had been put to a choice of evils and had taken the most manly and also the most hazardous and hopeless one. Before there was time to calculate our chances with the foe before us, we struck with great clash and outcry, our fresher horses giving us an impetus that sent us far into their ranks; but these ranks were deep and as lusty as our own.

The animal I was riding, being spirited but too light for the work he was put to, was at the onset struck squarely on the shoulder by a powerful charger whose gleaming white teeth showed viciously at my saddle horn. The blow, by reason of superior weight hurled my mount toward the edge of the line, partly turning him about and

directly in front of an officer whose sword was lifted to strike me.

The officer was Philip Deverny, and he uttered my name as he turned his weapon aside. Just then came a flash and a report seemingly at my very face, a shock and a sting, and I pitched headlong from my horse. The animal, evidently a new acquisition and unused to battle, with no hand now at his rein, dashed to one side snorting with fear, and dragged me after him, my shoulders on the ground and one foot fast in the stirrup. How far I was drawn along I can not tell, for presently I received a tremendous thump on the head and knew no more.

CHAPTER XVIII

AND SOME DAY—

ABOUT nine o'clock in the morning of the second day after the events last related, two men rode at a leisurely pace out of the county town of Corydon. One was a deputy of the district provost; the other was Griswold.

"And so," said the latter, when they had got well beyond the town, "proceedings against Bell-ray have been suspended."

"Yes," answered the deputy, a youngish man of good presence. "What else could be done? The doctors declare that he is now *non compos mentis*—which means, in plain English, that his mind is not right—and they furthermore declare that he will never be any better until his skull is repaired by some one who understands that sort of carpentry. It seems that he was hurt three or four years ago, and their theory is that that bullet of Spelker's traveled over the ground covered by the former injury, and set his mental clock back to that time, completely wiping out everything that has happened since."

"It may be," said Griswold, thoughtfully, "that the old hurt explains his recent conduct."

The other laughed. "I don't remember that all these other people had a knock on the head, but it is possible. It would at least be a charitable thing to believe."

"What has become of Spelker?" asked Griswold, after a while.

"Why, man, haven't I told you?" was the counter-query. "It was all simple enough; a mountain fell on him, or something like that."

"What is the joke? I don't understand it."

"It is no joke at all; at any rate it was not to Spelker, nor would it be to you or me if the same thing should happen to us," said the deputy seriously. "He thought he had killed Roger Bellray—indeed, he boasted of it that night in Corydon—and Bellray, whatever may be said of him, has many friends. Within an hour or two after making his boast he got word in some way—and it must have come to him very straight—that he had been marked by the brethren of the acorn for slaughter. Now Spelker, as we all know, was more discreet than valorous where his personal safety was concerned. So he put himself under Captain Bracken's protection and started to leave the country for a time. That very night Bracken's party with Spelker and another"—he paused for a moment, looking at his companion; "well, I may as well tell you—it can do no harm now as

his cake is dough here anyway—and another, by name Vawter, a useful rascal if you don't trust him too far, left town together, Vawter to rejoin his latest employer, then uncomfortably near, and Bracken and the others to take boat somewhere along the river for Louisville. Early in the morning they picked up Captain John Trenham, who had taken the night to visit his mother, and carried him along as prisoner of war. All this, remember, came to me last night in a report from Bracken. Well, separating from Vawter, the captain pushed toward the river and came upon it near Kinkle's Landing. He saw a packet coming up, and as the road down was too far away, he, under Spelker's leadership, undertook to make a short cut through a break in the bluffs. All that Bracken knows is that from the side of the ravine hundreds of tons of limestone and earth tumbled down on the two unfortunate men, and—there they are. That is what became of Spelker, and likewise of poor Trenham. I don't care much for the horse-trader, for he was constantly swindling the government that he professed to love and was an arrant coward to boot. As for Trenham, we have one enemy the less."

"It was merited and quick retribution in his case, too," asserted Griswold, solemnly.

"How so? And why retribution?"

"Because it was he that took the arms to Bell-ray's. It was for that purpose he was out that

night instead of to pay a visit to his mother," exclaimed Griswold, bitterly. "It was to arm the people that you call 'brethren of the acorn' to stab us in the back while we faced the raiders."

"Since you speak of that matter," returned the deputy, facing the other with a suggestive smile, "I remember that I also have a letter from Vawter, received yesterday morning at the hands of a reliable messenger, in which he reports a narrow escape from a band of desperate characters to whom he attributes some patriotism but more fear for their own skins. He says these people carried him off to some underground place, mistaking him—and not altogether without reason, it must be admitted—for a rebel spy working in cahoots with the men of the acorn, and there forced from him, as the price of his life, a confession as to how the arms came to be at Bell-ray's. He says he told these men that Captain Trenham had them conveyed there, and told them a lot of other stuff, all of which he asserts positively to be untrue, and writes that he hastens to tell me, as the responsible man hereabout, so that no mischief will result from his unwilling fairy tale."

"Is that all he says?" asked Griswold, reddening.

"Practically all."

"Does he not say where these—these desper-

ate people took him and what they did with him after he confessed?"

"No, the letter is very short, which he explains by saying that he had to write left-handed, as he had that same night, after his inquisitors left him, fallen and seriously injured his right arm."

"I don't wonder that he did," said Griswold, abstractedly.

"What's that?" asked the deputy.

"I don't wonder that he wrote a short letter if he had to do it left-handed. It's a difficult thing for a right-handed man to do," responded the other, escaping from his blunder.

If Vawter had seen fit to hold his tongue—for he must have heard his name and Wysart's at least—he, Griswold, would do likewise, for the deputy provost was a trifle jealous of his powers, and might not countenance independent action, especially when it was directed against one of the government's information gatherers.

They continued their journey in silence, save for a remark now and then on matters not connected with this story, until they had traveled several miles. Then Griswold, pointing to a large house with red chimneys standing far back from the road, said:

"I wonder if the widow knows?"

"How could she know?" answered the provost. "After I have withdrawn the guard from

Bellray's I shall make it my painful duty to stop and tell her—or I will let you do it."

"Excuse me from that service," said the other, throwing up his hand protestingly. "Give me a command to meet a man and I will obey; but this is a responsibility that I would evade, even though the family belongs to the secesh."

Coming a mile further on, to the lane running from the public highway to Roger Bellray's house they turned their horses into it. As they neared the house they saw two persons, a man and a woman, on the shaded veranda. The man was sitting in a rocking chair, a white bandage about his head; the woman was seated on the outer edge of the floor, her feet resting on the wide wooden steps. These two persons watched them as they approached, and were plainly holding a conversation about them. When they reached the gate only the provost's deputy dismounted. The girl—for it was Kate—rose to receive him as he went up the walk. Roger made an effort to do likewise, but she put out her hand and restrained him.

"I am well enough to receive my guests," he said, a little peevishly and yet mildly, more as if he were stating a fact than protesting.

"Yes, Roger," she returned gently, "but they know you have been ill, and will take your sitting as no discourtesy."

The deputy came up to them while she was speaking, and understood.

“Keep your seat, Mr. Bellray,” he said, after bowing to Kate. “I trust you are improving, sir.”

“Thank you; I am very much better, Mr.—, Mr.—, pardon me,” he stammered weakly; “my memory has become very treacherous, it seems, and your name escapes me.”

“Lancross, Francis Lancross.”

“Yes, certainly; you are the friend of our guest, Mr. Shaw—a very entertaining man, that Mr. Shaw, though he did talk very absurdly at first about many impossible things, and”—laughing—“I did him the injustice to think that something was the matter with his head. That didn’t last long, however, and he explained that he was a great joker. Like myself he voted for Douglas, but he doesn’t think there’ll be any serious trouble; I hope he is right, though I don’t understand why so many soldiers were going by the other day—something very unusual—never heard of the like before. The outlook is very bad. But pardon me again; you may not take such an interest in politics as I do, and my sister, who is an excellent nurse for one so young, tells me that I should put it all out of my head until I am completely recovered.”

“It is always better to take the advice of one’s doctor and nurse—particularly that of the nurse,”

said Lancross, good-naturedly. "But we men make poor patients, Mr. Bellray; we are too much inclined to have our own way, and it's not always the best way, either." Then he added: "If you will excuse me, sir, I should like a word with Miss Bellray." With that he turned toward Kate and the two went into the house.

Now the deputy provost was only an official sojourner at Corydon, to which place he had been sent to investigate the temper of some of the inhabitants of that region with respect to proposed war measures. Rumors had been widely circulated that in many parts of the state there was to be organized resistance to conscriptions, and there had been many sporadic outbreaks already. Not only that, but it was also reported that dissatisfied persons were preparing to give armed aid at the first opportunity to the forces of the Confederate government.

It was known that secret political societies—always to be condemned in a free country—had been numerous established in many of the loyal states, with purposes and aims so obscure to the uninitiated as to arouse a suspicion which finally ended in resentment and bitter opposition. The leaders in these societies asserted their lawful character, and protested that their object was merely to conserve the principles of constitutional government during a period of great excitement; that they stood between the rebellious destruc-

tionists on the one hand and the loose constructionists on the other; and that, while they denounced and gave no aid to the first, they reserved the right to criticise any disregard of the constitution by the latter.

It is no doubt true that the great majority of those who made up the membership of these associations in the middle northern states were honest and patriotic according to their view of the times. But that there were selfish, reckless and scheming men among them, as well as others so naturally fond of excitements and intrigues as to care little for results and give light consideration to means, is beyond question.

It was not apparent then, however, and has never been clearly shown since that these societies were in fact treasonable. That there was here and there a man among them who was disloyal, and who held intercourse with the enemies of the government, is no doubt true. The population in many parts of southern Indiana was made up largely of families and the descendents of families who had emigrated from the seceding states, where generations of their forefathers had lived and died, and where they still had numerous kinfolk. The memories and traditions of the southland were still fresh, and gave rise to sentiments that hampered them in choosing their course in the great conflict between the sections.

It is not, therefore, strange that men who would

have been the fierce partisans of their government in a war with a foreign power now held back, and in their uncertainty of purpose knew not where to turn. This was one class from which the ill-advised secret societies were recruited. It was to this class that Roger Bellray belonged.

These societies were of course known to the government, which at first gave them little attention. But as time went on and feeling grew into a veritable fever of passion, when men disputed with each other without toleration, when personal quarrels became neighborhood feuds and these in turn presaged a nightmare of anarchy, the authorities sent agents abroad under instructions to act as occasion demanded.

Bellray was, as I have already endeavored to make clear, a man who spoke with great freedom and fearlessness, and though no honest man could be found who would depose to any overt act of his that could be tortured into treasonable conduct, there were many to denounce his expressed sentiments. It was soon clearly established that he, with others, frequently met in secret, but for what purpose could only be conjectured. That they were well informed as to each other and did not desire the association of outsiders was settled by the failure of shrewd secret agents to gain their confidence and obtain access to their meetings; in some localities, however, these agents met with better success, as Vaw-

ter had somewhere become a member of the general order. Of these men Bellray was the unquestioned leader—his the guiding and directing mind.

When it became apparent to the provost's deputy that an invasion was imminent, he caused steps to be taken for the arrest and detention of Bellray as a precautionary measure, governing himself by the saying that where there is smoke there must be fire. Captain Bracken's bungling had given him great concern, for the death of so powerful a man, with so numerous a following as he was known to possess, under such circumstances might provoke a great commotion and increase a bitterness that good policy should strive to allay rather than to crush. When it came to him early the next morning that Bellray was not dead, but only wounded, the Confederate cavalry was engaged with the legionaries at the town's gates. Later in the day, when the invaders, after capturing, had left the town and swept on to the north, he went to Bellray's house and, learning the situation, left a single guard until he could get word as to his further course from his superiors.

It was immediately after Lancross went away that Griswold, Wysart and some others rode up, they having followed for some time, at a safe distance, the track of the raiders. The former had received from some anonymous source informa-

tion that under the floor, at the corner of the house where Bellray's workroom was, fire-arms would be found. The identity of the betrayer was never disclosed, but when these facts became known to me my thoughts reverted to what Roger had said on the night of my departure for the South, to the effect that those in whom one most confided might be the first to prove false.

A search revealed that the person who directed this treacherous blow at the man who had already paid such a heavy penalty for his mistaken conduct was not writing at random, although Wysart and one or two others, when the matter was first laid before them, pooh-poohed and declared that it was preposterous to think that a man of Bellray's sense and standing would do such a thing.

When the discovery was made, Roger, who had followed the men—for he would go about—was more genuinely astounded than any other, and laughed to think that he should have such a treasure without knowing it, while Kate looked on, pale, tearful and silent. Wysart, it was noticed, talked a great deal, and as the party rode off was more violent in his denunciation than any of his companions. I fancied, when I heard about it, that possibly he had a thought of himself.

It was not until the next morning that the matter was reported to Lancross, but he did not see fit to change his plans as to Bellray, though he decided to redouble his vigilance in general. And

now he had come to say that he had received instructions directing him until further orders to do nothing more in Roger's case. It was about this that he desired to talk with Kate.

"I am glad to say," he began, when they were beyond the hearing of Roger, "that proceedings against your brother have been suspended and I have come to withdraw the guard."

"I can not tell you how happy it makes me to hear it," Kate said, overjoyed, and with tears springing to her eyes. Then she added, sorrowfully: "But what worse thing could the government do than it has already done? It has robbed him of his mind, and almost made a rebel of me."

"The shooting was very unfortunate, and none the less so because done against positive orders," returned Lancross. "But the man who boasted of the deed has dearly paid for it."

"How?" she asked, quickly.

"With his life," was the answer.

"If he has been executed so soon," she said, dropping her eyes, "then you tried him by court-martial—or did you give him a trial? Oh, I am sorry you did not wait, for he did not, after all, kill my brother."

"He was not tried by any human court or power; he was killed by accident," explained the deputy.

"Poor man!" said Kate.

A few minutes later she stood by her brother's

chair watching the departure of the deputy and Griswold, now accompanied by the guard, Shaw. She gave a sigh of relief; at last she could speak and act freely, for though the surveillance had been nominal, it was nevertheless irritating. Roger began to talk to her and she answered him absently; her gaze was upon the three horsemen galloping along the highway. In a little while she cried out in a startled voice:

"Oh, they are going there!"

"Going where?" asked Roger, who had ceased to think about the men.

"To Trenham's," she answered, her voice shaking.

"Well, why shouldn't they? They are gentlemen, I am sure, and it may be that they have business with Mr. Trenham," he said, alluding to my deceased father.

"I pray God that they have not," she returned forgetfully, thinking of me.

"Why, how strangely you talk, my dear child," said Roger, looking at her in amazement and still speaking from that past in which he now lived. "One would think from what you say that something terrible might happen."

"And so it may, oh, so it may," she cried, still in the moving present.

"Kate, what could happen? Your manner disturbs me," Roger said, reaching out and taking her hand, which was trembling.

She came to herself with a start and looked concernedly at her brother, attempting to smile but failing.

“What did I say? I fear that my nerves are not as strong as I have believed.”

“You said something terrible might happen at Trenham’s.”

“Oh, Roger, you must not tell—remember you must not tell—but young Mr. Trenham is at home, desperately hurt, and visitors might annoy him;” then, kneeling by his side, she leaned her head upon the chair arm and broke into tears.

“There, there; don’t cry. He is strong and will come along all right. He is a fine lad and some day—” he stopped.

“And some day?” she repeated questioningly, to draw him on, but he remained silent, the whole matter having seemingly passed from his mind.

CHAPTER XIX

THE COMING OF THE PROVOST

FOR a strong-willed, self-reliant girl Kate had greatly given way to fear when she saw the deputy provost and his companions going toward my mother's house, where I had found myself on regaining my senses the morning before. But heaven knows that there had been occurrences enough in the past four days to unsettle nerves even stronger than hers. What with the shooting of her brother, the boisterous passing of my General's men, the eager pursuit by the Union soldiery, the damning discovery of Roger's guilty store, together with the general confusion and disorder, it was not strange that she should have been moved more than others by the doubt, distrust and alarm that racked the community. And now to all these things had been added my own then unexplained misfortune.

Her situation was so singular, so entirely different from that of any other person, as to be well-nigh unbearable. Her pride had been touched but her heart bled; and with it all, making her lot harder to endure, was the realization of her own weakness, and her belief that she must be

dependent upon the mercy of those for whom she had so often and so resolutely contended.

To high natures the dominant impulse is to demand; to such it is torture to entreat, and if the supplication must be addressed to friends the sharpness of the pain is increased by an added humiliation, more keen, I think, than comes from submission to an over-strong and successful enemy whom we have opposed to the extent of our powers.

She was in a frame of mind to imagine the happening of direful things, as indeed she might, considering the inflamed condition of the people. Our bold riders had gone like a tornado through the county, levying quick tribute as they went. With enemies springing up as thick as leaves about them, and knowing that relentless pursuers were at their heels, they did not parley about terms but helped themselves. The condition was one of the General's own making and he might have foreseen the desperate straits to which he was afterward driven. But confidence in his men and in himself, and faith in the fortune that had never before forsaken him led him on.

His undertaking was not inspired by vainglory; it was not a mere desperate attempt to win renown for himself. Of that I am satisfied. He unselfishly sought to loosen the bands that were strangling his chief in the South, to give him an opportunity to breathe, a greater freedom and a chance

to save the great army committed to him. In a measure he succeeded, but at such a pitiful cost to himself. Nearly a hundred thousand men were called to arms to oppose him, and a large part of these were sent into the field. His struggle to save his command, as will be seen, was heroic, but it ended in tragedy.

Military ethics—if there be such a thing—naturally could find small place in his plans during the wild ride he had entered upon through the very heart of a hostile country. It was not equitable that his men should ask only their own consent in trading their wearied horses for fresh ones as they went along, but I reflect that his Unionist pursuers did likewise. Nor can many other acts charged and treasured against them be justified by any known moral principle.

And yet there is a code, recognized in all times, under the tenets of which they stand excused—the code of military necessity. I do not include under this term the appropriation of skates in July, of birds in cages and of bolts of red calico, isolated instances of which are recorded against these troopers, who seemed eager in the first stages of their march to make a jest of their danger.

What I do hold is that my General had abundant precedent for the gravest acts which can justly be laid at his door as commander by those who suffered at his hands. And I ask of them, in

that good spirit which has since come to smooth away the wrinkles of that time of strife and wipe out the bitterness then aroused, to consider the smoking waste along the Shenandoah as more than compensation for their losses.

But standing in the very presence of the invasion, with the thud of hoofs, the rattle of sabers and the boom of cannon yet fresh in their ears, and the earth still damp and yellow over the graves of valiant defenders, the great mass of the people in the county where I lay might have little inclination to search for precedents, whether such be usual or otherwise.

It was fear of them that filled Kate—fear, not of Lancross, who represented authority, but of Griswold, who stood for the right of the people to act for themselves, independent of authority. Was it not one of the latter class who had attempted to slay her brother?

Thus she reasoned, not knowing that Griswold, with natural moderation, had already done much to temper the feeling against her poor, bewildered brother; not knowing further, as she could not, indeed, that he would afterward perform the same service for myself, whose escape from death was by such a narrow margin that I take to myself no credit for living at all.

When I pitched from my horse during the fight in the road the frightened animal had dashed into the woods. Young Sam Hollen, returning in

the night with civilian apparel with which to clothe his wounded brother before taking him to Sutton's house, who had agreed to harbor him only on that condition, had heard a groan. Investigation disclosed my body tightly wedged between the forks of a large log, a position which had no doubt been instrumental in my escape from capture as well as from the entangling stirrup, which, with a part of the broken strap, was lying at my feet.

From there, during the night, with help brought by the refugee, I was conveyed to my mother's house, where I was found to have not only a dangerous shot wound in the side, but a broken arm and so many contusions and scratches that it was not thought profitable to take account of them.

Captain Sivad, with the larger part of his small force, had got away, but many remained, and of these some were beyond mortal aid, as were likewise some of their opponents. Heaven pity us for those days! A young Union officer had scrutinized every face carefully, the lad said to me when I was able to hear his story, and seemed surprised and yet relieved when one for whom he was apparently looking was not found. That, thought I, was Philip Deverny.

The provost's deputy, feeling it to be his humane, if not official, duty to acquaint my mother with what he supposed to be the fact of her son's death, went straight to her door in pursuance of

his melancholy mission, and inquiring for her, was shown in and seated until she could be called. She was not long in coming, and there was that in her face which showed that she was in deep trouble, causing Lancross to think that possibly she had already heard what he had come to say. He was unknown to her and introduced himself.

"Madam," he said, "I am Francis Lancross, deputy provost for this district."

She bowed and was silent, her hand upon her heart, which began a painful beating when he revealed his official character.

"I have come to speak to you about your son, and my duty is a most unhappy one," he continued.

"Oh, sir," she cried at this, "you certainly do not mean to disturb him; he can not be moved yet."

"I do not understand," said the deputy, greatly puzzled. "I—I have nothing to do with removing him; that is a matter for you to determine. I did not know that you had heard. Pardon me for adding to your distress. My sole purpose was to perform a painful service."

"Nor do I understand," said my mother, her face showing a deeper perplexity, but determined to solve the riddle, the relating of which to me afterward caused an amusement that, I am sure, did not do my wounds any good. "We are clearly at cross-purposes. You speak with great

kindness, sir, and I thank you for that. But what would you tell me about my son?"

"Only of his death, of which sad fact you seem to be already informed," replied the deputy, rising. "My intrusion was well meant, madam, and that must be my excuse for troubling you."

"Stay," she said, with a detaining gesture, as he was about to go. "My son is dangerously injured but not dead, and he exacted a promise from me this morning that if one in authority should come he was to be told of it. I did not think it wise, but you know that a mother's heart and a son's head are not always in accord."

Saying nothing, for his amazement was so profound that he could formulate no fitting speech, and with a strong doubt of Bracken's trustworthiness, he waited while my mother, excusing herself, came up the stairs to notify me of his presence. At my request, and only staying long enough to tell me the nature of his mission, she returned below and showed the visitor up.

"I am told that you are Mr. Lancross, the deputy provost," I said, as he took a seat near my bedside, looking very concerned and serious, as if half disposed to take me for some strange kind of ghost.

"I am that person," he answered, as if his own identity, at least, was not doubtful; "and I suppose that you are Captain Trenham, lately

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with the rebel general who has turned us upside down around here?"

"The same, and I am glad to see you; the more so because I am told that you do not visit us officially."

"The meeting is very unexpected on my part," returned the deputy. "Until a few minutes ago I had reason to believe that I would never have the pleasure of looking upon your face. Captain Bracken's report was very unfavorable, indeed."

In spite of my many pains I was forced to smile. Bandaged and plastered, and unsightly as I knew myself to be, his pleasure at seeing me then could not have been great, and so I told him, in jest, which set him to laughing and put us both more at our ease. A bit of humor is often very useful by way of laying a foundation for serious things, and I had a trouble that I much desired to get rid of. It was about my person. I could neither get away nor hope to remain long undiscovered, and so I surrendered to him then and there and asked that he arrange for my parole. This he agreed to do, and afterward formally executed the agreement. It was the best I could do, not what I wished. But it took a great load off the mind of my mother, who for two days had trembled and turned pale every time she heard the grind of a wheel or the step of a horse's foot, and for that much, at least, I was thankful.

CHAPTER XX

THE RIDE OF THE THREE THOUSAND.

MY active career as a soldier was at an end, as time proved, but it chanced that I was to play a part—small though it was—in the closing act of the ill-starred enterprise by which so many were undone. Of that I shall speak; but before I do so I must tell how it fared with those from whom I had been separated by the treachery of Vawter.

So far as concerned that locality where my mother lived I had been willing enough to remain more an on-looker than to be a participant in events. But once beyond it I can truthfully assert that I would have taken my place with my fellows without any qualms of conscience, and with no motive for action other than the commands of my General. As it is, it almost seems to me—so keen was my interest—that I galloped with them along the roads by which they made their desperate progress, and that I participated in the misfortunes by which they were at last overwhelmed.

The advance felt its way toward Corydon that first morning in Indiana, and well in front were

my own men, contrary to what I had planned for them. But of that they were ignorant. A few hundred legionaries, with a courage far greater than their strength, sought to check this audacious rebel host. From their rude, hastily constructed breastworks they sent forth a very gallant fire. But it was snuffed out like a match in a tempest, and the men who pulled the triggers were first enveloped in the cloud of gray, then disarmed and cast aside. This was the first obstacle since the invasion was accomplished. And how soon it came! Though failing to do more, it did cause a little delay, and delay in such a situation is everything. Even then the thousands of blue-garbed pursuers were at Brandenburg.

Onward! Through the town clattered the rebel hoofs and rumbled the rebel cannon, and the great game of "fox and geese" was under way. What a fluttering of wings there was, what consternation, and yet what a determination arose to run this gray fox to earth!

The next morning, Salem, fifty miles inland, and two hundred removed from any hope of help! Already thousands had hurried to arms and other thousands were concentrating for hasty equipment. Behind, the roads shook with the tread of the cavalry that had followed from the South. Against this one, a dozen generals were laying plans, organizing and transporting forces. Half-frantic telegrams were passing over the hot wires

between Louisville, Indianapolis and Cincinnati, and countless lesser places. Alarm bells were ringing in every town and village and hamlet.

The enemy must be cornered. But the gray fox knew how to turn and to wind in and out, never losing his direction. And he also knew how to show his teeth. Reports of his movements conflicted and put him first here and then there, and the bewildered foes knew not where to strike. They made ready at many places and moved according to their information. Country people and townsmen along the invader's track were in a state of alarm bordering on panic. Not accustomed to beholding any considerable body of soldiers, and none that were hostile, they vastly overrated the numbers of my General's men. Besides, they were expecting to have their throats cut, and an expectation of this character is not conducive to a calm judgment of things and events.

On and on, under the blazing summer sun, with little sleep and little rest! As by magic, the whole population knew that three thousand horsemen were running a race—the most astounding race in history—with death or captivity the penalty for losing; a race with the telegraph and steam cars, and the unnumbered foes that growled about them and behind them and forced them on. And far ahead other hosts were gathering

to harry them and to drive them this way and that.

The atmosphere was charged with excitement and fear, and danger lurked everywhere. Unharvested wheat stood over-ripe and neglected in the fields. Husbandmen had suddenly become soldiers, and in masses were being rushed here and there along the invader's track. Never did pioneers work with such desperate energy clearing the primeval forests as did men now work to block with felled trees the roads that they had taken such pains to make. The sound of the ax, the crash of falling trees, mingled with the shouts of men, the clatter of shod hoofs and the crack of guns. Far aloft spread the smoke of burning bridges, destroyed by the General to hinder his enemies.

The fox must be hemmed in. But not yet was it to be. He did not fear the legionaries or raw recruits, numberless as they were. It was the foe behind, and those other well-trained soldiers hastening up from the war region and rising like a cloud far in his front, for whom he was on the lookout. The broad river was on his right hand, and it was now alive with armed craft ready to pounce upon him if he should attempt to recross. On his left, for hundreds of miles to the northward, was a country filled with enemies desiring his destruction. In opposition to these conditions was the fertile brain and daring spirit of

one man and the strong arms of his faithful followers.

North Vernon, Versailles and Sunman Station! It was now Monday morning, and four days since the river was crossed—days of hard riding and strategy, with scant time for rest. The beginning of a new week; what would the end of it be? The air was filled now with murmurings of rapidly concentrating foes pouring forward from the middle North in excited streams like the rising tides of the sea. The alarm bells had aroused the people. From shop and store and field, from office and counting room, they came, eager, untried, and with nerves tremulous with tension.

What way would the fox turn? He did not turn. Straight ahead he rode, passing the Indiana border and thundering upon the highways of Ohio. And now ninety miles in a day and a night he went, while on his right two Unionist forces, each in the darkness believing the other to be the invader, fell into furious conflict and drenched the soil they were there to defend with their own blood.

On and on he swept, brushing aside one foe and eluding another, defying the telegraph, the steam cars, the dozen generals, the swarming thousands—night and day, day and night. His men were of iron, but iron will break when eaten by rust, and into these men was eating the rust of tremendous exertion without rest. There was no

time for recuperation, no time to replace the vitality that was being constantly expended.

A few of the weaker dropped from their saddles and were picked up from the wayside by pursuers, some of whom were now treading on their very heels. At halts others fell into the slumber of exhaustion from which their officers could arouse them with difficulty. But once in the saddle again, they pressed on with mocking laughter for their foes and hearts beating high with courage. Their chief was in the van, and what he could endure they would endure, and where he led they would follow as long as they could keep their leaden feet in the stirrups.

On, for six days more, through storm and shine they rode. It was the first day of a new week, Sunday. They had drawn toward the river Ohio, now in unseasonable flood, a yellow, rushing, foaming barrier between them and the more friendly Kentucky. It seemed that God was against them. Here was Buffington Island where the General had thought to cross, but here also his enemies lay in wait to thwart him, to drive him back. And here they fought, these wearied men—these men almost dead in their saddles—with these others, fought and died. On again, but there were hundreds of their fellows who could not follow.

Only twelve hundred were left of the three thousand. But the foe followed, that foe which

crossed at Brandenburg, as determined and hardy as the quarry he was pursuing. And other opposers poured forth from every town and village and middle-west army post, on foot and horseback and railway train. They patrolled the highways; they watched from hill and tree top; and they waited in wood and field the coming of the presumptuous rebel.

A great roar filled the midsummer air, growing louder day by day. The earth shook under the tramp of new legions. All business was suspended. Nothing was thought of but the raider who for weeks had eluded and baffled his enemies in three states, and turned upon himself the eyes of millions. For his splendid courage he was lauded; for his blindness he was condemned. He was foredoomed to failure and disaster, but he was winning the future admiration of the world, and the present respect of those who were straining every nerve and muscle and brain cell to bring about his overthrow. But not yet was it accomplished.

The same day, twenty miles above Buffington Island he came again to the margin of the broad river. Here he resolved to breast its sweeping flood. Orders were given and the men rode in as they would ride upon the green sward or upon the dusty road, reckless of risk and danger. Those in advance were far out toward the southern shore when the gunboats of the Federals

suddenly appeared. The General himself was in midstream, his powerful horse swimming gallantly. Looking back, he saw that it was impossible for the rest of his command to effect a passage of the stream in the teeth of the enemy's fire that was now being directed against them, against him and those about him, against those others now nearing the green soil of Kentucky. He guided his horse around and went back in the hail of shot, to remain with the remnant of his command to the end.

Only eight hundred were now left to him of the three thousand, and these eight hundred pressed on again. The sun went down but still they pressed on, through the twilight and into the night to a point off Blennerhasset's Island, where three score years before Aaron Burr unfolded to the English scholar his plans for a southwestern empire.

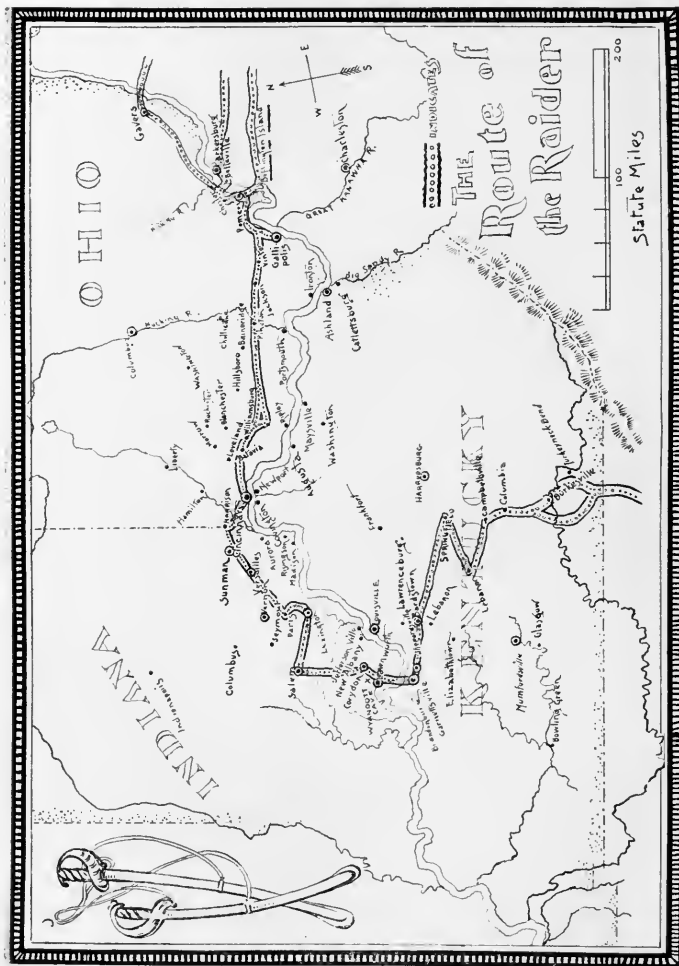
Not so quiet as then were these somber shores. Coming from all directions, even from the south where lay the river, its bosom shimmering under the lights of the armed patrols, were the pursuing hunters, who now believed that the object of the chase was surrounded and without chance of escape. They moved in and shut off all means of egress, save on one side where an abrupt mountain barred the way like a mighty wall which no man, they thought, would dare attempt to scale. One man did dare and eight hundred followed, in

single file, in the darkness. Up and up, stumbling, falling; up and up, winding around, and then down and down and away, while the foe awaited the coming of the dawn to finish the work of destruction.

On again, toward the east, rode these men so desperately tired and so desperately beset. For six days more they moved, sometimes thrown to the right or to the left, sometimes hurled back, hampered, harrassed, but forward toward the east. A cloud of dust marked their march and revealed their presence, and other clouds of dust rose to mark the paths of the hunters.

It is incredible that men can endure what these men suffered. They were in the saddle twenty-one hours out of each twenty-four. From day to day they were killed or captured, singly or in groups. Everywhere they were met by fresh companies of legionaries which swarmed and buzzed about them, and often darted upon the flanks or upon the rear and stung. The uproar and confusion increased; the shouts of men, the trampling of hoofs, the rattle of equipment, and the guns and sabers of the on-rushing thousands flashed and gleamed in the blistering sun.

But the grim man in gray rode on. Until he was overthrown there would be no rest for pursuers or pursued. What mattered it that his force had been bitten and torn until only a weary fragment remained? It was the leader who was important,



not his followers—this bold chieftain who so often had ridden far and wide unchecked. And just now the President of the United States, the great Lincoln, was making anxious inquiries as to his whereabouts.

Another Sunday dawned, the 26th of July. Far in eastern Ohio rode three hundred men—three hundred of the three thousand, and many of these, feverish almost to delirium from wounds received in fierce fights on previous days, reeled in their saddles as they went. They were two miles beyond the village of Gavers, the General at the front of his scant column.

What meant that hurtling cloud of dust ahead? And what meant that yellow cloud behind and that other rising over the Highlandtown road? Nearer and nearer approached these signs of the enemy. The scant column came to a halt, and, as it did so, across the fields dashed the Unionist cavalry. From every direction, it seemed, they streamed toward these hunted men in such numbers that it was folly to resist.

The gray fox was cornered at last in the open, but he had led a long chase. He surrendered to a man believed by him to be a captain of militia, and made quick terms for parole. These terms the Union general would not allow, whereupon Morgan demanded that he be put upon the field again where he was, and avowed that he would fight them to the end. But this was the end; the

race had been run. Beneath his horse's feet five hundred heart-breaking miles had sped. The telegraph, the steam cars, the dozen generals, the swarming thousands, had won, and for the losers who lived there was only the prison.

Was anything accomplished by them save their own destruction? I will answer, yes; the victory six weeks later by Bragg's Confederate army in the great battle of Chickamauga, when the two forces there engaged lost more than thirty thousand men.

CHAPTER XXI

THE HELP OF A STRONG MAN

IT was these things that were happening, these and so many more, while I was complaining of my own poor ills. Even to my ears, secluded as I was, from time to time came word of the bitter progress of my comrades. But for many days reports were so meager and unsatisfactory that I could not make head or tail of them. When the end came, however, and the news was flashed from city to town, and thence to hamlet and farmstead, that the bold and far-famed raider was a prisoner in Ohio, the middle North sent forth a shout of rejoicing that I could understand, but in which I could not join.

Far and near the heavens were alight with the bonfires of victory, and cannon and anvil thundered and crashed in very joy over my General's capture. I did not blame them—these people of the North—as I am sure he did not. We are all disposed to make the most of our successes, and when the war spirit is on us we are likely to give extravagant expression to our feelings. But I think I might have been spared the experience—though

I was in a manner responsible for it—to which I was subjected for being one of the invaders. During the progress of the raid my short connection with it had apparently been overlooked. Now I was to be suddenly remembered and made disagreeably conspicuous at a time when, had I been allowed to make a choice, I would have remained in the retirement to which my misadventures had consigned me.

Less than two miles away, at the crossing of the roads, stood, in one angle, a school-house and in another a blacksmith shop. No other buildings were near except the house of the smith, yet it was the favorite meeting place for the country folk round about. Here it was that they heard political speeches, and here it was, also, that they gathered to consult together about the state of the war and to celebrate victories achieved by the Union arms.

At the celebrations the smith's anvils were used as a substitute for cannon in noise-making, and these I heard one night as I sat, still bandaged and sore, on my mother's porch. My broken arm was useless and would so remain for many a day, but the wound in my side had healed so rapidly that I felt no further danger from it. The night being very warm and dry, I had determined to stay up as late as I dared rather than endure the confinement of my room.

The distant explosions under the anvils boomed

out now and then, showing that much powder was being burned. Between them, and less distinctly, came sounds of cheering. To me these noises aroused melancholy reflections, as may well be believed, but along with them came a feeling of relief that the strain was over, and a satisfaction in knowing that my one arm would have availed nothing at last.

Presently the sound of wheels coming furiously up the lane took my attention. A carriage stopped at the gate and some one sprang out and ran toward the house. It was Kate Bellray.

"Is Roger here?" she asked without ceremony, pausing at the steps. It was not light enough where she stood to see her face clearly, but her voice showed great agitation.

"No," said I, wondering, as I got to my feet and went forward, "nor has he been to-day."

For a moment she stood hesitating, as if undecided what to do, while I, knowing that Bellray never went forth now unless accompanied by some one from his household, began to feel deep concern.

"John, what can it mean?" asked his sister, plainly showing increased distress. "I came home from the Wests' a little while ago, and found Roger gone. Aunt had seen him walking toward the road with another man just before dark, but thought nothing of that, as he often goes that far, and, besides, she thought the man

might be Sutton. A few minutes later she saw him clambering into some sort of a conveyance, which then drove rapidly away. He went off with no one from our place, we learned, and as he seldom wants to go anywhere but here, I thought—oh, I don't know what to think. Where do you imagine he can have gone? Think for me, John. He is no more fit to be abroad than a child."

I was in as much doubt as she, and was about to tell her so, and yet beg her not to feel any alarm, when, through the silence that had ensued, came the booming of the anvils.

"Can he be *there*?" she said, suddenly. "I can think of no other place. But if he is somebody took him, and he will not understand it at all. I will go there." With this, she started off.

"Wait," I exclaimed; "who is out there in the carriage?"

"The young refugee, Sam Hollen."

"I will go with you," I said.

"You must not do anything of the kind," she returned firmly. "You are not strong yet, and those people are not your friends. They are rejoicing over the downfall of your General."

"Nevertheless if you go, so shall I. No harm will befall me."

Without further ado, I took my hat from the chair on which I had flung it and walked down the path, giving no further heed to her contin-

ued and almost vehement remonstrances. Once through the gate, she ran forward and sprang into the vehicle.

"Quick, Sam; drive on," she cried.

But the refugee, not understanding her purpose to outwit me, and being deliberate at best in his mental processes, delayed long enough for me to reach and enter the carriage. Then he started down the lane, having previously turned about. Kate had not yet yielded, however, for as we neared the road she leaned forward and spoke to the boy.

"Drive home; you can then return with Captain Trenham," she said, in despair over my obstinacy, and still bent on having her way.

"Miss Bellray has forgotten," I put in, affecting a laugh, which, however, I did with an effort. "We go first to the celebration for Mr. Bellray and then home."

The boy looked over his shoulder at his mistress. She said nothing, and taking her silence for acquiescence in my amendment he turned the horses' heads in that direction. In the road he whipped up smartly and we made very good speed. A quarter of an hour brought us within plain view of the illumination. People were moving about in the glare, men and women, and darting in and out among them were the smaller forms of children. Less frequently came the ex-

plosions of powder and when we had drawn nearer they ceased altogether.

The people seemed to be crowding toward one side of the road, save the children who still played about the flaming heap which was not allowed to die out for the want of feeding. The rude platform from which the orators were accustomed to address their listeners in fair weather was surrounded by a hundred or more persons when we came upon the scene and stopped a little way off. A man whom I did not recognize was speaking from the platform, upon which were seated several other men. An exclamation of surprise from my companion drew my eyes to her face, which was pale and quivering with anger.

"Look!" said she; "there is Roger—on the platform. They have brought him here to ridicule him."

Before I could even attempt to restrain her she had jumped from the vehicle and was pushing her way through the crowd. I then heard Roger's name pronounced by the speaker, who retired and Roger moved slowly toward the front of the platform, where he stood silent for a moment. I got out and walked nearer, smothering with indignation at the cruel joke, for it could be nothing else, of which the poor man was being made a butt. Kate was lost in the crowd somewhere, no doubt fighting her way to the platform, and I, powerless to help her, stood in my

place mortified beyond anything that ever happened to me.

"My friends," it was Bellray's voice, "I am told that you are ratifying your great victory. I don't know just why I should be here, as I voted for Mr. Douglas, but if Mr. Lincoln can prevent the coming of war, I shall be satisfied." Here some of the men laughed, the one who had introduced him the loudest of all; but the speaker went on: "Just now, however, I am one of the defeated." More laughter came from a few, mingled with groans, and shouts of "copperhead" and "butternut," but of these words he did not seem to know the significance, and continued: "We fought you as hard as we could—"

At this point there came a great uproar from the crowd, with cries of "hang the traitor and be done with him." Just at that moment Kate climbed upon the platform and stood beside her brother, her face as white as the dead. Bellray, amazed at the strange reception accorded him, and flushing with anger, did not see her until she laid her hand on his arm. At the unwonted spectacle the people had become still, and to their credit I will say that I believe the jest was the work of a few who, in this monstrous fashion, sought to humiliate their old enemy. Flashing a look of scorn and defiance at those below her, she turned to her brother and said, gently:

"Come, Roger; we will go home."

"Not until I have told these ruffians what I think of them," he shouted hoarsely. "They called me a traitor—didn't you hear?—called your brother a traitor and want to hang him."

A voice was saying something in my ear, but so strongly did what was before my eyes hold my attention that I did not realize it until I felt my shoulder gripped warningly. Looking around I saw that it was Griswold.

"Listen, man; go back to your conveyance. I will get Bellray there in a moment. You were crazy to have come, and wouldn't be here, I suppose, if it were not for the fools who brought him. There are wild fellows here. Go; don't make it too hard for me."

I was unarmed, but had it been otherwise, I was at least sensible enough to know that Griswold's advice was good. Turning my eyes again upon the platform I saw that it was deserted, and the crowd surging this way and that, the women prudently flying to the outskirts and then across the road, calling their children as they went or dragging them along if they could get them in hand.

Lowering looks were already being thrown toward me as I moved slowly in the direction of the carriage, and I heard the words "rebel" and "raider" muttered in tones anything but pleasant or reassuring. Many men carried revolvers in their hands as if expecting an outbreak, and the

weapons glistened ominously in the firelight. Some of the fellows eyed each other suspiciously. In one group I saw Wysart talking to the man who had signaled to Vawter in the cave. Truly they were not all of one mind, or, if so, they were not well enough acquainted to know.

That one untoward act would precipitate violence was beyond doubt. This act cool heads were at work to prevent and none more strenuously or discreetly than Griswold, who was picking his way through the crowd with Roger, Kate following closely. Griswold was laughing and calling out jestingly to one and another. His assumed good humor and nonchalance seemed to have a mollifying effect, for some covertly slipped their weapons into their pockets. Behind him, however, jostled a large number of men with still scowling visages.

I stood by the carriage until they came up and then, waiting until Roger and his sister had entered, I climbed into the seat with the refugee driver, who was entirely collected and imperturbable.

"Good-night, Bellray, and all of you," said Griswold, cheerily, "and now, my lad, away you go."

As we swung round into the road two or three men ran out and caught the horses, bringing them suddenly upon their haunches. The boy

seemed to arouse suddenly and lifted his whip, and at the same moment several other men rushed snarling up to the side of the carriage. Before I knew what they were about I was pulled violently from my seat just as the whip descended upon the frightened horses, which, finding their heads now free, and the way clear before them, sprang snorting forward.

Still feeble and crippled from my former injuries, I could make but a sorry defense against the assault. But the little that I could do I did. Wrenching my sound arm free, I seized one of my assailants by his hairy throat, and gave it such a squeeze that he pulled and tore at my wrist while gurgling with fear and suffocation.

In my fury I held on, knowing that I was being struck at from all sides, and conscious that some wretch was crying wildly for the others to give him a chance to shoot me. The powerful form of Griswold was forcing itself toward me, as I could see by the swaying of the jammed mass of men in front, and he presently got to my side. Shouldering my would-be executioners out of his way as if they had been so many sacks of straw, he raised his two hands; one he held out warningly, and in the other was a large revolver.

"I will kill the man who strikes the next blow," he said, in a voice as hard as flint. "Captain, let go of that man."

Unconsciously I had retained my desperate

clutch upon the fellow's neck and he was purple in the face from the effects of the strangling. I released him at once, being myself half blind from the blood that was running from a wound in my scalp. Evidently no one was prepared to defy the stern man who held his weapon so steadily, for, as if by common consent, they crowded backward, leaving a cleared space about us. All save the one that I had held, and he merely stood stroking his throat and gasping. Then for the first time I recognized in this man the one who had persuaded Roger to speak.

"Serves you just right, Durring; if anything, you don't get what you deserve," said Griswold, rebukingly. "If you hadn't been idiot enough to bring Bellray here Trenham wouldn't have come. He came with Miss Bellray to take her brother away and not in foolish defiance of you fellows. And listen, all of you; he is going home without another scratch, and myself and *my men*—do you understand?—are going to see that he is let alone as long as he behaves himself. It shan't be said that any decent man need fear to live in Harrison county—not if Dave Griswold can prevent it. Now clear out, you there in the road; we are going that way."

Thoroughly cowed by this forceful man, whom it was clear they all knew and either respected or feared—possibly both—they made room for us to pass. A hundred yards down the road the Bell-

ray carriage had been stopped. As we approached, Kate, who was already upon the ground in a frenzy of apprehension and anger, ran forward to meet us, with exclamations of delight and relief at my safety, but not forgetting in the least to thank my companion for his part in the night's dangers. Roger leaned weakly out of the vehicle.

"It's all most extraordinary, Griswold; I don't understand it," he said. "To treat me like that when I attended their meeting to ratify Mr. Lincoln's election merely through courtesy. You and I have never agreed, Dave, but you at least have always been a gentleman."

"That's all right, Roger; I'll fix these fellows. Just leave them to me," Griswold responded as he turned and walked rapidly back in the direction of the now diminishing light of the great bonfire.

Mounting to my place with the boy we rolled away, going in silence for some minutes save for occasional feeble growls from Bellray, who seemed able to understand that he had been treated with great disrespect and fretted under it. When we had covered a mile in this manner I felt a touch on my shoulder from behind. Looking back I saw Kate bending toward me.

"You see now that I was right, sir," she said, softly.

"Right or wrong, I am glad I went," I

answered. "And as good luck would have it, I throttled the rascal who was the cause of our going."

"Then I forgive you."

She spoke these four words so decisively as to leave no room for doubting the depth of her resentment against those who had perpetrated the outrage. Any personal humiliation that she might feel on account of the occurrence she could overlook. But the indignity put upon her brother, through whose clouded mind pride still struggled for expression, was an affront too deadly to be easily forgotten. And in very truth it was many a long day before she did forget.

CHAPTER XXII

CORPORAL NEFFITT

HEARING nothing further from the extremists who, at my first public appearance, had undertaken to visit punishment upon me, I concluded that Griswold was able to keep his word. At least I saw no further signs of violence, though there were mutterings from the more radical ones. For many days after the affair at the cross-roads I was compelled to keep to my bed, for what with the excitement and the rough handling my wounds suffered an aggravation that well-nigh proved serious. On this account and for reasons of prudence, it was some weeks before I ventured to exercise that freedom of movement which should never be denied to a peaceable man. And such I now was, God knows, whether I would or not, and such, it seemed, I was likely to continue so far as military operations were concerned.

I would probably have remained in this unsatisfactory state for a much longer period had it not been for an event that befell me on the Corydon road and turned my thoughts elsewhere. The time was evening. The sun had already dropped

so low that the September dusk was beginning to settle over the earth. We were driving from the town—Kate Bellray and I—which I had that day seen for the first time since my return, and whither we had gone upon some errand of hers. Upon nearing the entrance to my mother's place the gaunt figure of a man, in tattered civilian clothes, arose from the ground at the margin of the highway. Walking into the middle of the road ahead of us, he stopped and stood awaiting our approach. He did not move either to the right or left, even when we were almost upon him, but seemed determined to bar our way. A slouch hat was pulled far down over his forehead, and beneath its limp brim, in a tangle of unkempt hair and whiskers, lurked two steady eyes.

Having no wish to run him down, though being far from satisfied as to his purpose, I reined up quickly, and sharply commanded him to get out of the way. Instead of doing so he raised his hand deprecatingly, and stepping a little out on the side on which I was riding looked me keenly in the face. There was a quick change in the glow of his eyes, but what it betokened was not at once apparent. It struck me that somewhere I had seen the man before, but in the business in which I had been engaged I had seen many faces. And some of them, though appearing momentarily amid the clash of arms, are in my memory yet, and more than one with the hot

blood streaming down. Had this man been friend or foe? Or was he merely a wayside vagrant bold enough to attempt a robbery?

"Move aside," I repeated impatiently, as he had not yet cleared the road. "Or if there is anything you want, speak out." I added the latter words more softly, for it occurred to me that the man looked in need, and all my anger vanished when I observed that one ragged sleeve hung empty and flapping by his side.

"Beg pardon, Captain, but I wanted to make sure it was you," he said, in tones hollow and weak, as he came toward me. "A little while ago I asked a feller goin' by if he know'd of anybody named Trenham livin' about here, and he told me to go to hell, as if you was there or ought to be, and I felt a little cheered up. You don't look like you'd had a' easy time yourself and the boys must be mistaken."

"What boys, and how mistaken?" I asked in amazement, tempered, however, by a dawning suspicion of a part of the truth.

"W'y, your boys—once know'd as Burkley's. A feller told us the day we crossed—" he paused as at a disagreeable recollection, and drew his begrimed hand over his eyes—"that your folks lived round here som'ers and not in Virginny at all. And when you didn't show up next day, some of them new fellers—"

He stopped in confusion, now looking at Kate

for the first time and instantly taking off his hat, as though feeling that he had been guilty of grave disrespect in keeping it on so long. When he did this, I recognized the unruly corporal who had captured poor Venault.

"Neffitt!" I exclaimed, reaching out to take his hand, and glad to see this rascal, who, with his many faults, had been one of the bravest of my men.

Greatly to my surprise he drew back, rolling his excuse for a hat awkwardly around his long forefinger.

"Corporal," said I, "what is the matter? Why will you not take my hand?"

"I'm a fool to let it stick in my craw, but it ain't fair to take no man's hand, meanin' to say a thing like I'm goin' to say. But I can't tell you about it in front of the lady—it ain't in my heart to hurt you mor'n I can help. And when I've told you, instead of offerin' to shake hands, you'll set the dogs on me."

"In heaven's name, man, what is all this about? Can't you see that what you have already said, if unexplained, is worse than anything you have in your mind to tell me?"

"I guess you're right," he said after a little hesitation. "The boys thought—some of them new recruits, mind—when they heard that, that mebbe you'd—" here he took a step backward,

watching me closely the while—"that mebbe you'd bolted to the Yanks."

This was so much worse than anything I had expected to hear, a suspicion so foul and besmirching and so wounding to the honor of a soldier, that I, hardly able to believe my ears, could only sit and stare vacantly at Neffitt as if numbed by a sudden paralysis. When I turned from him at last and looked at Kate I beheld her gazing at the corporal with flaming cheeks and dilated eyes, before which the poor fellow seemed to shrink and shrivel pitifully.

"Shame upon you!" she cried indignantly.

"'Twan't me, miss," he said hastily. "I never really believed it myself. And as I couldn't soldier no more"—he fluted his sleeve with the stump of his lost arm by way of emphasis—"and don't want to nohow since the General's took, I thought if I'd good luck in findin' him I'd tell the Captain how it was and get his word for it that 'twan't so. And I hope, Captain, that you won't be too hard on them new men—for most of 'em has been killed—and that feller who said your family lived here said next day that he'd saw you with the Unionists."

"Neffitt, that man was a scoundrel and a spy, and this is merely a piece of his villainy," I said. "But nevertheless it is not the sort of thing one likes to hear."

I bade him sit down at the mouth of the lane .

and wait for me. When I had driven Kate home and returned to the place where I had told him to remain, he was sitting on a mounting block in the gathering darkness in an attitude of great dejection and weariness. He got up and I took him into the vacant seat beside me. Little was said until we reached the house, and then I observed how greatly changed the poor fellow was. The old dare-devil, irreverent spirit appeared to have been crushed out of him, at least for the time. It had gone with his arm, the loss of which, I noticed afterward, filled him with deep humiliation, to which the calamity that had befallen his General added a keener sting.

After he had eaten and rested he was somewhat more cheerful, but save in a general way I held no conversation with him that night. I was not then in a humor to deal patiently with the bearer of such a tale as he had told. Neffitt had often come under my observation, and while rude and reckless, his blunt nature made him at times even offensively truthful. Therefore I did not doubt the story in the least, but was humiliated to think that such an inference, so sullyng to my honor, should be drawn and believed against me.

Vawter! He was the man who had crossed the river with us, and he it was who had seen me with the Unionists, a prisoner, it is true, but of that he had not told them in his devilish purpose to repay me for the blow that I had struck that

night at Bellray's. Had I known of this on the occasion when he forced me to fight him in the cavern, I believe I should certainly have put an end to his career.

It was the next day that I learned all that the corporal knew, not only as to the story about myself—by which I was now resolved not to be troubled—but as to my General and his men. He appeared clad in a suit of my own clothes, and with a countenance remarkably improved by a razor and shears that black Peter had wielded. He looked a little shame-faced and uneasy, as if carrying a burden of which he wanted to be relieved.

"Captain," he said, attempting a salute with the hand that was not there, and smiling ruefully at his mistake, "'—I forget sometimes that it's gone—I oughtn't to 'a' said it before her, though, bless her pretty face, I don't know who she is or how much you'd care. 'Twan't right, nohow, and I wan't bound to obey your orders *then*."

"Never mind that, Neffitt; she knows how it is," I responded, seeing that he was really distressed about the matter.

"Well, she's spunky, and stood up for you strong," he said, meditatively stroking his bony chin, still red from the vigorous scraping administered by Peter.

"And there's another thing I've never felt just right about it," he added, looking at me curiously,

some of the old mischievous sparkle in his sunken eyes.

"Out with it."

"I kicked you onc't," he confessed, repentantly.

I laughed. "So I have ever since suspected. But that is no great matter either, now, only I hope nobody saw you."

"Nobody did; if they had I wouldn't 'a' done it." Then he continued in explanation: "I alwus wanted to kick an officer; not that I had anything agin 'em, but just for the satisfaction of knowin' I'd done it. They'd told us and told us, time and agin, that any feller that struck his officer would be took out and shot, and the more I thought about it the more I know'd I just had to do it—only with me it was to kick and not strike. At last I got where I must kick an officer or get out of the service, either by desertin' or bein' killed, and I didn't want either one of them things to happen. Don't believe I could 'a' fought any more if it hadn't been for that chance you give me. Afterwards I just turned to and seemed like two men."

The war-worn rascal stopped and laughed sepulchrally, as though the memory of the kick he administered to me afforded him even yet a melancholy sort of satisfaction.

"Beg pardon, Captain, but it did me a powerful sight of good. Over and over I says to my-

self, 'Neffitt, my boy, you're all right; you've kicked an officer and settled the question of equality. Now keep your eyes open to do that officer a favor.' And I've done it. You know what happened that day when you and that foreign feller was a havin' it all by yourselves. And before we'd got out of Indiany I knocked the daylights out of two of the boys who said they thought you did it. That was just after the General happened to speak to me one night and I ups and asks him if he'd heard from you. He said he hadn't and know'd you must 'a' been took by them there cornstalks. And I tells him what the feller said and that some of the boys said mebbe it was so. Then you ought 'a' seen the General and heard him. He took me by the collar like he was goin' to shut off my wind for onc't and all.

" 'Do you believe it?' he says, fierce as a painter.

" 'No,' says I, 'but I'd like to know for sure.'

" 'If I thought you did,' says he, 'I'd twist your fool neck like a chicken's. If you ever get a chance tell your captain that I said so.' "

How my heart rose at that and swelled with pride and gratitude at this added proof of the confidence of my unfortunate chief.

" 'Twa'n't much time we had to think about anything except savin' our skins, after that. At Buffington I got shot, and was nabbed with a lot more and was took up there to Indianapolis.

My arm wa'n't doin' well so they put me in the hospital and cut it off, and that ended *me*. I was sick and weak but putended to be a powerful sight wuss than I was, and I'm ashamed for deceivin' the good women who nursed me as carefully as if I'd been a Unionist instead of a rip-snortin' Confed, and never none too good at that. After awhile, one night, I give 'em all the slip somehow, and got out of town. The fust feller I stumbled acrost at daylight was out feedin' hogs. I was nearly dead, as I'd gone all night like a house afire. He wanted to know where I was goin', and I told him just for a little walk over to one of the neighbors.

"'Your neighbors is down south,' he says, suddent like, 'and you're a run-away rebel.'

"'With that I 'most dropped in my tracks. But after lookin' at me a little bit he says: 'You ain't any good to nobody but yourself and never can get in the army agin, so what's the use?'

"'And then he told me that our folks had a son of his in prison at Andersonville, and he would do for me what he'd want anybody do for him if he got out. So he slapped me in a haystack and brought me some victuals and told me to keep quiet and go to sleep till he come back. He didn't come back till nearly dark, then he had some more victuals. And he give me them old clothes—only they was a little better then—and

a little money, and told me to hustle as if the devil was after me.

“ ‘If they ever get you in Camp Morton prison you won’t get out till the war’s over unless it’s on a board.’

“ ‘And that’s what I don’t want,’ I says.

“ ‘Then for God’s sake, man, use your “r’s” —talk like a white man and not so much like a damned nigger or yo’ll get ketched up for a reb. Anybody can tell you’re a Johnny.’

“That’s all he know’d, of course, for it’s the niggers that talks like us—and anyway I’m only from Kentucky and ain’t bad that way. That night on the road and next day in the woods—just to obleege that feller, for I didn’t need do it at all—I said over and over every word I could think of with an ‘r’ in it and tried it northern style, and have been doin’ it ever since until now I can ’most turn in for a Yank. But there’s a pile of them words! My tongue aches yet; I think it must be twisted a little.’”

He stopped and put his fingers in his mouth, feeling about in quest of proof that he had not irretrievably damaged the vocal appendage, without the free use of which he would have been a most unhappy man. Having satisfied himself in this respect, I verily believe he would have talked all day had I not thereafter confined him by questions to the subjects upon which I partic-

ularly desired to be informed. As to what happened after the affair at Buffington, he knew nothing, of course, save by common report, but before that it was ride, ride, ride, in general very much as I have already told it. In matters of detail and personal incident, he was able, from his experience, to illustrate the blinding, benumbing hardships of the struggle in a manner beyond my power to reproduce, even were it my desire to do so more fully than I have.

"And now," said Neffitt, determinedly, at the end, "since I've found you, and settled the question that troubled them new fellers, and told you what the General said, I'm goin' to start back."

"Back where?" I asked, uncertain as to his meaning.

"W'y, to help the General, where else? Mebbe 'twon't be no use, but leastways I'll try. Can't tell what I can do till I get where the prison is."

"It is more than two hundred miles away," said I.

"I know that, but I'll get there. On my way down here I've been practicin' on bein' a one-armed Union soldier from old Kentuck—there's many of 'em down there, you know—so's if I made slips with them r's and such 'twouldn't make no difference. I've got it all safe and sound up here," and he tapped his head with his fingers.

"We will go together," said I, with sudden resolution.

"Cuss that feller who told them things. Captain, just give me another chance to take your hand."

His face beamed with joy, and he gripped the hand I held out to him as if bent upon making amends for an unjust suspicion.

I was rapidly getting strong again in limb and body, and idleness had begun to irk me. The old longing for action, which I could not gratify in the direction that accorded most with my desires, turned my thoughts swiftly toward my luckless chief, whom I would aid if possible. Left in prison he would fret his soul out—this man of action and deeds. As well cage the eagle and expect it to thrive and learn to like its captivity as to tame his restless spirit within confining walls.

When once this design had entered my mind, I greatly wished that I possessed Roger Bell-ray's old keenness in contriving. But after all, my services and Neffitt's might not be needed; others might already have under way schemes to the same end far more effective than any that I could conceive—being slow witted in such things, as I have said. The opportunity for adventure, however, and more than all else, the wish to aid the man who had so strongly bound himself to me, aroused my sluggish faculties and presently I

found myself burning with enthusiasm and eager to be off to Ohio, while, much to my wonder, a dozen nebulous plans began to jostle each other in my mind.

CHAPTER XXIII

A MESSAGE FROM THE GENERAL

NOTWITHSTANDING our eagerness to start on our self-imposed mission we were forced to endure delay, the chief cause of which was the necessity for allowing Neffitt time to recover his strength more fully. Rough and uneducated as he was, he possessed a readiness of wit and a fertility of resource that I would greatly depend upon in any undertaking in which I might engage. It was ten days or such a matter before I decided that he was fit to depart, though he was anxious to do so much sooner than that. Then, after providing him with money sufficient for his journey, I saw him set out, for upon reflection I had determined that it was not best that we should travel in company as I had at first suggested.

Two days later, having made excuses for my departure and indefinite absence, I rode away again toward Jeffersonville. It was in the night, as that other ride to the same town more than a year before had been, for now I had as little desire to be spied upon as then. Arriving in the vicinity of the town early in the morning,

I stabled my horse at the house of a man I had met at Bellray's, and upon whom I knew I could depend, leaving it to be recovered by Peter. The two or three miles yet intervening I made on foot.

That night I reached Cincinnati, and the next night was in Columbus, without other incident than such as falls to the lot of the ordinary traveler. Seeking out quiet lodgings I slept soundly, making up in great measure for the enforced wakefulness of the two previous days. Being a total stranger in Columbus, and thus having no expectation of being recognized, I made no pretense at disguise. The most that I had done in this respect was to provide myself with apparel that might make me pass as a young tradesman or a well-garbed mechanic.

When I had breakfasted the next morning I at once started out to fix the location of the prison, which I knew to be somewhere upon the border of the city. I had seen nothing of Neffitt, which fact disturbed me a little as he had been told of my route and had promised, providing he met with no misadventure, to keep a careful watch for my appearance. This I considered necessary, seeing that we were both without knowledge of the town and might, in the absence of such precaution, have some difficulty in meeting save after exasperating delay.

I had gone but a block or two when, chancing

to look across the street, I saw a maimed veteran in a well-worn Federal uniform trudging along abreast of me, and now and again turning his eyes in my direction as if keeping me in view. It was Neffitt. At the next corner he made a motion indicating that I should follow him down the intersecting street, which I did. He shambled on, I trailing behind, until the outskirts of the city were reached and the grim stone prison which held our General loomed up before us within its strong, high walls. As he now seemed to be walking purposely slower I soon overhauled him, but not until he had turned aside so as to put an obstruction between us and the lookouts on the yet distant walls.

"Well?" said I, questioningly.

"I've made a start; I've hired that house out there for my family." He pointed toward a little house some two hundred yards away to the right, which seemed sadly in need of repairs.

"Your family?"

"It hain't come yet, and won't—for I hain't got none—but that's what I got it for; leastways that's what I told the feller I hired it from. It's clost to *the place*. I'm goin' to put in a stove and a bed and then get acquainted with some of them guards, somehow."

It was plain that the corporal had been going ahead with his old-time impulsiveness, and while I felt that he was probably the more capable of

the two in the execution of some parts of the business in hand, I feared that in his hurry to get on he might be indiscreet. He evidently guessed what was in my mind, for he made haste to assure me that he was acting with the utmost caution.

“We’ve got to know how they are in there, and what’s goin’ on,” he added. “Without that we can’t move a finger to help ’em, and mebbe not then. I’m bound to get inside, though, somehow. I know where you’re stayin’, and I won’t see you agin till I’ve got something to tell. Leave this part of it to me, if you please.”

He was so earnest, and spoke with such a thorough understanding of the situation that I could do nothing less than accede to this arrangement. Unless we could work in harmony with the imprisoned General we might as well not work at all. So, agreeing to Neffitt’s proposal and leaving him to his own devices, I went back to the city.

Day after day passed until a week had gone by with no tidings from Neffitt. At last, fearing that some misfortune had befallen him, and realizing that without at least a pretense of an occupation suspicion might be attracted to myself, at a venture I answered an advertisement for agents. It turned out that the advertiser wanted solicitors to take subscriptions for a new war history. I was on the point of declining this, to me, distasteful

service, but before I had committed myself there came a providential illumination.

Truly I was dull of wit and memory. For while my chief desire was to get word with the General, I had not thought of a method by which he had once received an important communication from within the Union lines that enabled him to accomplish one of his most daring exploits. It came from a woman who, notwithstanding her sex, was known to fame as Lieutenant Rawley, and who did, in fact, bear a commission as an officer for some time in the command of General Forrest. Shrewd, of keen intelligence and forceful character, she was long a purveyor of information useful to the South. The intermediary in the instance to which I refer was only a small, harmless book. At the time it came into the General's hands I was acting temporarily as his adjutant. After scrutinizing the volume for a few minutes, he passed it to me with the look in his face that I always saw there when he contemplated one of the bold strokes for which he was renowned.

"Well, sir," said he, "what do you make of that?"

"A nice little book," I answered turning the leaves; "but it will probably be awhile before you get time to read it."

"Read it!" he cried, laughing; "I have read it within these five minutes, and a very pretty

story it is, too. But let me tell you that the name of the author of what I have read is not that on the title page."

An hour later we were in the saddle and carrying a sharp wind in our teeth, so great was our hurry. He had left the book in my possession and I placed it in my pocket. Some days later, after we had accomplished the duty that the secret intelligence had put before us, I returned it to him, having in the meantime studied it with great care, and discovered nothing of the "pretty story" of which the General had spoken. When, however, he gave me the key to the mystery, it was a mystery no longer, but as simple a matter as one would care to know. In very truth its simplicity was its safeguard, for it hardly approached the dignity of a cipher.

And here now I had stumbled upon an opportunity that gave much promise. It at least aroused a hope that I might bring about the very thing without which, as Neffitt said, we could not move a finger to aid those within the formidable walls upon which we were at the time gazing. I succeeded without difficulty in engaging myself to the advertiser. Not knowing then how closely the officials guarded their important prisoner from even the view of outsiders, I thought that by prosecuting my new avocation skillfully I might perhaps be allowed conversation with General Morgan himself. But I did not intend

to show myself at the prison until I had established a sort of footing in the business by securing a respectable list of subscribers in the city.

For two days I invaded offices, shops and public buildings, and tramped up and down the streets and avenues from house to house with a veritable fire of energy, achieving a success beyond anything that I would have believed possible. I had even obtained the name of the governor of Ohio himself—that man who had done so much to aid in the ruin that had come upon my comrades. Under other circumstances it would not have been possible to do these things; but in pursuance of my purpose then I would allow nothing to stand in my way, submitting to rebuffs, and even to insults for which it would have been a pleasure to administer heavy chastisement, but at last emerging triumphantly with the signatures of the offenders.

On the night of the second day I sat in my room, tired but gloating as over a battle won. The next day, fortified with the evidence of previous industry, I would boldly invade the prison and with lip and tongue fight my way to the General. I had come to understand, as never before, that the man who swings a sword is not more a hero after he has overthrown his enemy than many who engage in the conflicts of peace. Presently I became aware that some one had stopped at my door. Not waiting for a knock to be

sounded I went forward and opened it. My late corporal stepped quickly within. Closing the door I turned toward him, delight and anger warring for expression, for the failure to hear from him had greatly provoked me.

"Well, sir, you have given me a pretty wait," said I. "I had almost concluded that you had been caught and hung."

"Very far from it," he answered, pulling a chair into the center of the room, seating himself upon it and by a gesture indicating that I should do likewise with another. "Now," he continued, "I've not seen the General, and didn't get to talk to him. It took me till to-day to find out that I couldn't. They're all-fired skeery of him and them officers of his'n that are with him. Won't even let 'em look out of a winder."

The corporal was greatly cast down, but not discouraged by his partial failure. It was gradually disclosed that he had learned some things that might be of benefit to us in the making of further effort. The General and his fellow-officers were confined in the wing of the prison called the East Hall, and occupied cells in that side of it facing the town. During the day they were allowed to exercise in the corridor upon which their cells opened. Surrounding the buildings was a thick wall, twenty-five feet high, upon which at intervals were the small shelter houses for the outside guards, who, armed with guns,

were expected to prevent the scaling of the walls at all hours.

Some of these guards, when off duty, frequented a public house not far removed from the prison. Of this house Neffitt had become a regular patron, carefully studying the habits of the men. In respect to any over-indulgence in drink, he confessed sadly that, with two exceptions, they were above reproach. With these two he was taking pains to become especially friendly, but with what particular object in view he did not say and I did not inquire. Indeed, as he afterward admitted, this course was taken at a venture, in the absence of definite information from within the walls as to what would be expected of us.

As things befell, I am forced to concede that without this foresight an event that set the country by the ears might have had a very different termination. When the corporal left it was with a promise to report to me on the following night, for I told him I might have something to say to him, though not then confiding to him the nature of my purposes.

It might be that I should fail even more ingloriously than Neffitt in my intended attempt to get speech with the General. This did not now trouble me so much since there remained the other method of communication upon which I set great store. Taking up the volume that I had

been using in my business of the past two days I went to work to prepare my message. The book contained a table of contents showing more than thirty chapters, designated by numeral letters. Choosing the nineteenth chapter, I made a small dot with my pencil a little below and midway between the last two numerals, thus indicating that the ninth chapter had been selected as the one in which the message could be found. Turning then to the figure 2, marking the second page of the book, I put a short dash above it, indicating that the second and each succeeding alternate line, counting from the top of the page, might be looked to as furnishing the letters and words composing the message. A dot beneath, and another some spaces to the left of the figure completed its ornamentation. These designated the second letter preceding the one having the mark *beneath* it as the letter to which attention was to be given in spelling out the words. A short dash to the right of the figure 3, marking the third page, indicated that the message would begin on the third page of the chosen chapter, and a circular mark resembling a small letter "o" beneath the figure 3, allowed the use of the third preceding word entire. Let it be understood that the location of these little marks, all of which were made lightly, meant a great deal, and that I might have arrived at the same result by putting them in very different places.

Being done with this, I found the ninth chapter and on its third page began to make faint but discernible marks below the proper letters and words in the designated lines. I had previously fixed in my mind the communication that I desired to make, and having marked the last letter, I then, in like manner, appended my own name. Then I read it all over to see that I had made no mistakes. To me it was perfectly legible, and there was no doubt that it would be as clear to the General, if it should ever get to him. *"Two friends outside—what can we do?"*

In the selection and arrangement of these simple words I had given my brain a serious cudgeling. It was necessary that the message should be short in order to be quickly read, that it should be composed of letters most frequently used, so that it would run freely, and that it should acquaint the receiver with our presence without compromising him with our outside efforts if any unfriendly eye should see and decipher the meaning of my marks. A discovery of my purpose would not only take me out of the game, but would probably be fatal to any plan of escape that the General might have in contemplation or already on foot.

I was not versed in cryptography—to which, indeed, as I have said, this simple system bore little resemblance—and hence was sadly lacking in confidence in my poor penciling. But as I

only intended to use it—if I could—in the event that my attempt to reach my chief personally failed, I determined that I could do nothing less than take such risk as there was. Another matter that troubled me greatly was the fear that, even if my book should reach him, he would have no opportunity to prepare a return message. If, as was most reasonable to believe, his inspection of the volume should be under the eyes of an official, he would not dare put pencil, if he should possess one, to its pages. And yet there were few things that he would not dare where a point was to be gained. But as to all this I would see in proper time.

In the afternoon of the next day I set out for the prison and succeeded in being admitted to the presence of the warden. It was with much difficulty that I could get him to give me a hearing for my work. He would certainly have turned me out with little ceremony had not his attention been opportunely called to the signature of the dignitary under whose appointment he held his office. For, be it understood, the prison in his charge was a state and not a national institution, and in it were held hundreds of malefactors who had been convicted in courts of justice of all sorts of crimes against the laws.

Though my General and his officers were confined in a wing of the prison separated from the parts occupied by the convicts, I felt then and al-

ways have felt since, that the fact of their incarceration there at all was a needless and unworthy humiliation of proud men, whose valorous deeds entitled them to better treatment from their foes. Not, however, until I stood within the portals that had been so often opened and shut to allow the incoming and the outgoing of thieves, murderers and the like, did I feel in full measure the keenness of the shame that had been put upon them. How much I should have liked then to pour out upon the head of the blameless warden the indignation that rose to my throat, God only knows. But instead of doing that I was forced to smother my real feelings and assume an entirely different state of mind and heart.

In deference to the signature of the governor the warden listened to what I had to say, but at the end curtly refused to add his own name to my list and presently turned me over to the mercies of one of the sub-wardens, a kindly-disposed elderly man, who speedily succumbed to my arguments. And then, after using all the powers of ingratiating that I could bring to my aid, I asked to be allowed to show my work to the rebel officers, who must be, I asserted, peculiarly interested. That I was told could not be permitted, and the manner of the refusal left no doubt of its finality.

Fearing the effect of persistence in my desire to see the General personally, I begged the sub-

warden to take the book up, together with my list and submit it to the General, explaining that I should like to obtain the autograph of so famous a rebel. After a brief consultation with the warden, followed by a close inspection of the list and a careful shaking and leafing of the book to see that no message or other objectionable thing was concealed in either, the sub-warden made off. He was gone a long time and I was encouraged to believe that my ruse might be successful. Nearly an hour passed before he returned.

"The General says he will take one if he is still here when you deliver them, but that he won't sign your list," said the sub-warden. "He says he hopes to be exchanged soon—which he won't be, of course—and that your book anyway, as far as he can see, is only a one-sided affair, giving the North more than its due and lying about the South. He'd really like to have it, though, as a curiosity, he says. He and Colonel Duke looked it over quite awhile."

"The impudent rebel," cried I, affecting to be extremely indignant, but really vastly pleased to know that my leader's spirit was in no wise curbed by his misfortunes. "But I'm resolved that he shall have it, and I ask that when I bring it you give me permission to force it down his traitorous throat."

At this brave speech the sub-warden looked at

me pityingly—or was it contemptuously? Which-ever it was, I felt that it was born of respect for my chief, and by that was comforted. But he was not content with turning me off with a look.

“And Colonel Duke said that, if I pleased, I might tell the dapper little book-peddler—he missed it there in your size, and it’s a shame you haven’t got grit enough to be a soldier—that if the warden is willing, he requests the pleasure of having you kicked out, with his compliments.” The sub-warden laughed, as if this were a pleasant bit of humor.

“The devil he did,” said I. “Suppose you bring him down here and let him do it himself.”

“Oh, don’t take it so much to heart,” the official hastened to say, relentingly. “He saw something in the book about the Vicksburg surrender that made him angry, something about Pemberton napping within the city while Grant was running tunnels from the outside to blow up his fortifications. The Colonel said he knew Pemberton was the kind of man who would do everything he could do from the inside to save himself, even if he did finally march out on a national holiday. But he did say, as a matter of fact, that if it had not been for the breach made in the fortifications by Grant’s mines, Vicksburg would not have changed commanders so soon.”

I do not know how much more the loquacious sub-warden would have said had not a growl from

his chief shut him up abruptly. As it was, it occurred to me that during his absence he had been furnished with a verbal entertainment that was very likely not purposeless, and that the greater part of it had come from Colonel Duke was still more evident. Taking myself off in an apparently bad humor which I made a visible effort to conceal—beginning, by that time, to be a little vain of my performance—I hastened into the city and went at once to my room to learn if my message had borne fruit.

Turning to the table of contents I scrutinized the chapter headings, but saw no marks save those that my own pencil had put there. With a heart sinking with disappointment I was about to lay the volume aside when the thought flashed into my mind that possibly the General had not chosen to alter the cipher and that an answering communication might be found immediately following my own. And so it proved.

On the page following that on which I had put my last mark the paper showed signs of having been pricked by a pin. No casual eye would have noticed these signs, perhaps, but to me they were as clear as my own, though, as it seemed, made furtively if not in haste. In a little while I had spelled out these words: "*At work—danger on wall op. E. Hall—ready near thanks day—watch change commandants.*" That was all, but how much it seemed to me then. As I read the

message the prisoners had plans of their own under way in which I might be able to bear a part. Ready near Thanksgiving day! I remembered that the Northern President, weeks before, had issued a proclamation setting apart the last Thursday in November as a day for national thanksgiving. It was clear that some plan of the prisoners was expected to mature then. But what was this about a change of commandants? What they feared was evidently a close inspection of the prison, and discovery of their plot, such as would likely follow the incoming of a new military commandant. A rumor that the present officer would be superseded I had already heard, but until then it had made no impression on me. In the light of it now I read the General's message, and saw that Colonel Duke's words concerning the change of commanders at Vicksburg, which the sub-warden had repeated to me—as the former, no doubt, believed he would do—were not meaningless.

CHAPTER XXIV

FRIENDS ON THE WALL

COULD I have seen how my imprisoned fellow-officers were toiling at that moment for the liberation of their beloved leader, and could I have known how they had been toiling for weeks and would toil for weeks yet to come, my concern would have been even greater than it was. For it was a precarious undertaking, with many chances of discovery and failure as against a mere pitiful hope. Its successful execution, in the face of the disheartening obstacles that met them on every hand, would be little less than the accomplishment of a miracle. But these men of the free air were accustomed to obstacles and to overcoming them as well.

With no prospect of release from confinement in a regular way, they set about to find some other. Tramping the narrow corridor by day or lying in their pinching cells by night, they thought of many plans. It was the resolute Hines who dispelled the chaos of doubt. One day, engaging in conversation with old Hevay, a sub-warden of long service, he offered a casual remark as to the

seeming architectural and sanitary perfection of the prison, calling attention to the unusual dryness of the floors of the ground cells, one of which he occupied. If Hevay had a hobby it was that very thing, as Hines well knew. Straightway he told of the existence of an air chamber extending the length of the bottom tier of cells.

Carefully concealing his interest in this important revelation, Hines lost little time in testing its accuracy. With knives secretly obtained from the table on which their meals were served, he began to dig and pry in the hard floor. Little by little he made progress, and finally, after incredible labor and pains, penetrated eighteen inches of cement and brick to the space beneath of which the sub-warden had spoken. The debris was surreptitiously carried out in pocket handkerchiefs, and mingled with the ashes in the large corridor stove or else concealed in his own bed and in the beds of his fellows, who gave him such assistance as they could.

Once in the air chamber there was ample room for work. A tunnel was begun and pushed through the three-foot stone wall of the cell house, then under the corridor floor, then through the wall of the inclosing structure to the prison yard, but not opened to the air until the time came for departure. It was the work of weeks of the most wearing labor, weeks of patience, caution, constant vigilance, of pouring sweat and

pounding hearts. It was guarded by keen eyes and alert ears, and shared by many eager hands—the hands of men desiring liberty for another more than they desired it for themselves, and who would be content if that one should escape and they remain. To the aid of the knives—of such little avail against blocks of stone—was providentially brought a single other tool, a broken spade skillfully procured, and the light of candles which they had been permitted to buy and had carefully hoarded.

I did not know of these things until later. The battle for liberty was in progress, but what form it was taking could only be conjectured. That it was a stupendous conflict waged against solid stone, from a darksome hole in the ground, with such sorry weapons of offense, I did not dream. Hence I say, that had I known the truth my concern over the outcome of their struggles would not have been lessened. As it was, time passed slowly enough.

From evening to evening Neffitt came to report his progress. He was still working on the guards, he told me, and was getting on close terms with the two who had an over-fondness for liquor, asserting that they might prove useful. I think that the possible help he expected them to render was more of a negative than a positive sort, as he did not hint that they were lacking in either honesty or loyalty. But I did not then

seek enlightenment, and really hoped that our own ends might be achieved without involving any innocent person in trouble. He expressed no surprise on learning that I had fared no better than himself in my effort to speak with the General. The faithful rogue rather seemed to be pleased than otherwise, not because I had failed but because he had not been discredited. When, however, I proceeded to tell him of the message received, his delight was sincere and unbounded.

"They must be workin' a tunnel," he said with conviction, "and hope to get over that wall somehow. By all the smoky ghosts of hell I can help 'em there."

Much impressed by the enthusiasm displayed in the utterance of this original oath, I asked him in what manner he proposed to be of assistance.

"My two friends is on that wall. They lets down a string, I ties on a bottle or two and they celebrates the day, that is if it's Thanksgivin'. But they'll do it most any time for that matter, as I've already helped 'em that way onc't. Hope it'll be a nasty bad night, though."

"Is there any place from which we could run a tunnel from the outside so as to get under that wall?" I asked, having in my mind Colonel Duke's statement to the sub-warden about the counter-mines of Grant and Pemberton at Vicksburg.

“No, there ain’t, and it’s too risky. They comes over that wall and not through it or under it. If you can reach the General agin, for God’s sake tell him to make it Thanksgivin’. It’ll be easier to get them fellers to put on lots of steam that night.”

He left me a little later, taking an additional supply of money, having confessed to me that he was down to his last copper. We were both elated over the certainty that we were at last making definite headway. On the next day and still the next I continued my canvassing desultorily from motives of caution. After that I took no more orders—not being at all content with the unheroic character of my employment—and from that time only awaited the arrival of my books in order that I might have further excuse for visiting the prison. For these I had to send to Philadelphia.

Three weeks passed, and a vexatious delay in the coming of the books filled me with despair. The change in commandants was about to be accomplished, and the day of national thanksgiving was only two days off, when, to my joy, a heavy box was set down at my lodgings directed to John Clark, that being my own name in truth, though not all of it.

Being now armed with the authority of my calling I lost no time in making my way to the prison, carrying with me three or four of the books. In the one intended for General Morgan

was a message informing him of the threatened danger and telling him that on the night of the ensuing holiday he need not fear the wall. This I did on the assurance of Neffitt that he would not fail in the execution of his design. I had come to rely greatly on the corporal's ability in his chosen field, and beyond those latent doubts that always exist until a hazardous undertaking has been accomplished, I felt no misgiving.

It was in the afternoon and the sky was overcast by gray, smudgy clouds, through which filtered occasional flakes of snow that came hesitatingly down as if loath to reach the earth. The air was chill enough to justify me in turning up the collar of my overcoat and in taking strides that carried me quickly to my destination. A guard at the gate let me in, after consulting a higher official in pursuance of his duty. Only the sub-warden, with whom my business had been conducted when there before, and a clerk, occupied the office. The absence of the warden was a hopeful sign. When the sub-warden had accepted and paid for his own volume, I reminded him of the promise of General Morgan, made to himself, to take the book if not previously exchanged, and asked if he were still a prisoner.

"Yes, he is here," said the official, "and here he is likely to stay. He is too hard a man to catch to be turned loose in a hurry. Do you know that man has cost the government millions

upon millions of dollars? Well, it's a fact, and it's a good deal easier and cheaper to feed him here than to have to run him down again."

"That's right," I assented. "Give him time to read a little of the recent history of his country. It will do him good."

"He'd much rather be making it than reading it. But I haven't time to bother with your book now. Leave it here and I will see about it. Come back to-morrow."

"Well, there's one for that bloodthirsty colonel; maybe he will take it. If they've got any money I might as well have some of it as anybody else."

The sub-warden threw the books on the desk at which sat the clerk, and repeated the statement that I should return on the next day, which closed the interview. Grievously disappointed at this additional delay, but not daring to be too urgent I left the prison. I had not proceeded far on my road until I overtook a man who had been walking leisurely ahead of me as if he too had just left the prison, but if such was the case he had escaped my observation. As I was in the act of passing him he spoke, and his voice made me start with apprehension, for it was the voice of the spy, Vawter.

"So it is you that I find here, Captain Trenham," he said. "Now go a little slower while I pick up a bit; walk behind me—they can see us

yet from the walls if they look, and I don't want them to know that I'm talking to you."

Saying this, he quickened his steps and went before me, while I, gathering my wits, wondered what he was about.

"Give it up, Captain," he continued without looking around. "I don't want to make trouble for you, but I am here in the interest of the government to look for stray Morgan men. I relieved another agent only yesterday, and here you stumble upon me—the last one of the lot that I hoped to see. You have got something going, and if you don't give it up and leave this very night it will be my business to find out what it is, much as I dislike to do it."

He spoke deliberately, his head half turned that his words might the better fall back to me over his shoulder. It was already beginning to grow dark both from the hour and the thickening clouds, but darker still at this moment were my thoughts. Not for an instant, however, did I harbor any notion of abandoning my purpose. Presently, being out of view of the prison, he stopped and turned around. I had not yet spoken.

"Well, what do you say? Shall we have peace or war? Strange as it seems to me, I remember that I owe you something and am willing to do you a good turn."

"I will talk it over with you," said I, at this, "but we can not do it here. There's a place

a little way off where we can come to terms. It's the house of a crippled friend, who is not likely to be at home. Do you agree?"

He looked at me suspiciously. "How many more of your friends will be there?" he asked.

"Not a soul."

He finally assented, though not without hesitation, and felt about his person as if to make sure that his weapons were in place. As for myself I was wholly unarmed. I went straight to the little house that Neffitt had hired for his own use. It was dark and there was no external sign of occupancy, nor was my knock on the door answered. Trying the door it yielded and I went in, followed by Vawter. Striking a match, I found and lighted an oil lamp that was standing on a table at the side of the room; upon the table also was a loose coil of small cotton rope. Scattered about were two or three wooden chairs. To satisfy my companion that, save for us, the house was empty, I took up the lamp and together we went into the remaining rooms. In one was a cheap bed; in the other a small stove; nothing more in either. Returning then to the first room I set down the lamp. In the meantime my mind had been working busily.

"Mr. Vawter," said I, "you mean well, no doubt, and I thank you, but I shall stay."

He had seated himself in one of the chairs with one elbow resting on the table, the hand of his

other arm—the right one—in his overcoat pocket. At my words he moved uneasily and his face hardened into the old, wicked sneer.

“Then I must take you,” he returned sharply, “and I’ll do it before any other person comes. I think you mean to trap me and I’m a fool not to see it. Don’t resist or I’ll kill you. I gave you a chance and we are quits.”

With that he whipped a revolver out of his pocket and leveled it upon me, but not less quick was I. Springing upon him I seized his wrist before he could use the weapon, but he was active and strong, and then began a fierce struggle for the mastery. My foot became entangled in the chair and I fell to the floor, taking my antagonist with me. Making a desperate effort I succeeded in pinning him down under the very edge of the table, the arm holding the revolver outstretched and still in my grasp and the other held close to his side by my knees. With my free hand I reached up for the rope and got a coil of it under his head, then below his shoulders and drew it tight. Once more, a little further down, and save for the weapon he was at my mercy. Gradually working my fingers outward until they fell upon the pistol I tore it from his hand and flung it to the far side of the room. A minute more and he was helpless; then I bound him securely and propped him against the wall. Up to this time not a word had been uttered by either of us, nor did

either have much breath now; but Vawter was the first to break the silence.

"You win again," he panted, "and do it fairly again, too. What are you going to do with me?"

"Keep you close for a few days; nothing more if you give me your word not to connect me with this business. For myself I do not care, but there are others to be considered."

"Another, you mean, eh, Captain?"

"Have it that way if you please; what do you say?"

He looked at me a little while before replying, and seemed to be considering my proposition. At last he spoke: "I agree, and will stick to it, though five months ago I would have been drawn and quartered first. But I've got over that."

At this point we were interrupted by the entrance of Neffitt, who looked profoundly astonished at the unexpected scene. For a moment his eyes rested upon Vawter, then he turned to me.

"That's the feller, Captain, that crossed with us at Brandenburg—the one that said them things."

"Never mind that now, Neffitt," I cautioned. "It's all past and gone, and we have other things to think of. Can you keep this man here a few days? He must not be harmed—not in the least, you understand; just kept close and secure."

Neffitt consented, reluctantly I thought, for he

was the kind of man who cherished a favor or a grudge with equal intensity, and here before him was one who had played a scoundrel's part, to the injury and distress of many people. After satisfying myself that proper arrangements had been made as to the disposition of our enforced guest, I returned to my own lodgings.

CHAPTER XXV

THE ESCAPE

THE next day when I called at the prison in obedience to the sub-warden's command it was with some doubt as to whether I would be suffered to depart, for I was not prepared to place entire dependence on Vawter's word. But it was not long until I was reassured. The officials, so the sub-warden told me, had hesitated about allowing the prisoners to have my books, but on examining them had finally concluded that there was no good reason for denying them the privilege if they chose to exercise it.

As a result only one of the books was returned to me, Colonel Duke angrily refusing, upon renewed inspection, to have anything to do with the one designed for him. This did not surprise me; on the other hand I should have been greatly disconcerted if it had been retained, and even hastened away for fear that at the last moment some other person about the place might offer to take it.

Once more in my room and secure from observation, I turned again to the chapter headings in the table of contents. There was no mark or

sign until I came to Chapter XV, and here to the right of the numeral V was a puncture made with the point of a pin. Turning further I saw a similar puncture to the right of and another above the figure 1 marking the first page of the book. On the next page, to the right of the figure 2, was a short horizontal scratch. Above the figure 3 on the following page was a like scratch. The message was therefore in the fifth chapter, beginning on the third line of the second page, counting from the top, and continuing on each succeeding third line until finished. The letters composing the words of the communication, as shown by the position of the marks at figure 1, were those next following the ones *above* which the indicating mark would be found. With great eagerness I spelled out the seven words constituting the message which told me that on Thanksgiving night an effort for freedom would be made and urged that attention be given to the wall.

The morrow was the day of prayer and feast. It dawned gray and dull and threatening, and Neffitt's hope that the night might be a bad one was likely to be fulfilled. His two convivial friends were still doing wall duty, and he had, at their solicitation, he said, grudgingly promised to put it in their way to show an appreciative observance of the occasion.

To me that short day was seemingly the longest on the calendar, but darkness came at last and

with it a cold, steady rain that drove everybody indoors except such as were compelled to brave the weather. Near nine o'clock I set out for Neffitt's house and reached it to find him absent and the door fastened. Getting under the shelter of the sorry little porch built over the front door, I stood in the darkness and waited. In a few minutes Neffitt came and admitted me. When a light was made I saw that his not over-thick clothes were soaked and dripping, and that he was wet to the skin. His face was blue and pinched with the chill air and rain.

"A little of that will do you good," said I, pointing to a large bottle of whisky on the table.

"I'd like it well enough," he responded, looking at the bottle longingly. "But that's for them two friends of mine. They just h'isted one a bit ago. And besides *we* wanter keep a clear head—it's their noggins that's to get muddled; besides they paid for the whisky—likewise for them things to eat in that basket. I swore I wouldn't spend another cent for 'em—never can tell when a feller is goin' to get 'spicious. They gets together at midnight and has a supper in honor of the day."

With a complete willingness that on this night they should eat and drink to their heart's content, and recognizing Neffitt's good sense in refusing the liquor, I looked about me for Vawter, and found him in the middle room lying on the corporal's bed, to which he was securely strapped.

A neatly contrived gag, used by Neffitt only when he left the house, he explained, was in the man's mouth, and guaranteed silence. The spy had slept in the bed both nights since he had been deprived of his liberty, while his keeper had self-denyingly lain upon the hard, bare floor. I say lain, for I doubt if he allowed himself to sleep. When the gag was removed, Vawter offered no complaints as to his treatment, and only wanted to know how long his detention was to continue. He was greatly gratified to learn that it would be speedily at an end.

Eleven o'clock in the black shadows of the outer wall. Surely the drenching, wind-driven rain falling from thick clouds adapted the night to the purposes of those within that gloomy pile of stone. I had taken a position directly opposite the East Hall, and flattening my back against the cold wall, which afforded me some protection, waited. Neffitt had gone toward the shelter house on the wall to the left, creeping along like a shadow, with the basket containing the midnight feast swinging from his one hand.

It was horrible weather, and yet I rejoiced in it and even wished it were far worse. There was no way to judge as to the time; I could only listen and wait. It might be minutes or it might be hours that I must stay here, but stay I would. A noise on the top of the wall at last! Someone was walking up there, but cautiously, and

carrying a lantern. It was the guard on the right going to join his comrade on the left in his nocturnal negligence of duty. It was strange that they had not suspected Neffitt, and there, in the pouring rain, I gave thought to the corporal's eminent qualities as a strategist, and thought also of the failure of Bellray.

After what seemed a very long time there was another noise on the wall to my right, a dull clanking sound as of metal striking upon stone, quickly followed by a scratching of the inner surface of the wall from the top downward as if something had slipped over the coping, striking the surface as it descended. A distant bell was striking midnight. Neffitt moved up to me out of the blackness.

"They're comin'," he said at my ear in an eager, tremulous whisper.

"Who?" I whispered back fiercely, thinking of the guards and that he had failed.

"The General—listen! They're tryin' to grapple the coping."

Again came the clanking noise, but this time it was not followed by the sound of something falling. Instead, there came a faint, upward touching of the inside of the wall as if now something was ascending. Then there was a slight scraping on the top. Six times was this repeated, then something like a rope dropped down, striking me as it fell, for I had changed my position

It was made of coverings from the prison beds, knotted together, and up there at the other end, grappling the top of the wall, was the iron bar with which the fire had been stirred in the corridor stove, now bent into a hook.

Looking upward, I saw between my eyes and the gray of the sky a darker object like a man's head protruding over the coping. Through my hands I spoke my name, and instantly a man came sliding down the rope. It was Captain Hines. Hardly was he on the ground before another stood beside him. This was the General himself.

"Come," said I; "Neffitt will look after the others."

"So the other one is your corporal, is it? Brave soul," said the General.

Without saying more he sought about until he got the corporal's one poor hand in both of his own in a thankful grasp that repaid the poor fellow for all his toil. Then away, while the others in silence were reaching the ground. Straight we went to the railroad station, and boldly Hines, the ever daring, procured tickets from the sleepy agent as though he were the most innocent of travelers, while the General and I stood alone outside in the shelter of the widely projecting eaves of the roof, I listening to expressions of his gratitude of which my feeble efforts were wholly unworthy.

Thank God that a train was due in a few minutes, and thank God that it came and started when it was due to start! When we had entered the lighted car I saw that both men were bleached by the four months of imprisonment—four months to the very day. They wore citizens' clothes and now bore little resemblance to the bronzed men in gray who had so desperately ridden the northern highways under the July sun. On the train was a Federal officer in uniform, with whom General Morgan engaged in conversation by tendering the use of his flask just as the train passed near the walls of the prison which he had so recently left.

"That," said the officer as he accepted the offered refreshment, "is the hotel at which Morgan stops, I believe."

"Yes," responded the General, taking the returned flask and holding it before him, "and will stop it is to be hoped. He has given us his fair share of trouble, and he will not be released. I will drink to him: 'May he ever be as closely kept as he is now.'"

And so all went pleasantly.

In due time we came to a suburb of Cincinnati. The rain had ceased. Captain Hines rose and reached for the bell cord, giving it a warning jerk. The train slowed down in obedience to the unofficial signal and we quickly got off, we three, and hastened toward the river, the wide Ohio, that

had suffered us to cross its bosom only that we might be overwhelmed beyond. We reached it in the first feeble light of the morning, and found a stout lad already upon its margin bailing overnight rain out of a staunch little skiff. A liberal reward induced him to accept two passengers for the Kentucky side; then hand clasps and "God bless you's" and they were swept out into the mist. I stood there and watched them as they went. Where now were the patrolling war-boats? Where the swarming foes, the dozen generals? And where, alas, the three thousand? I stood and watched with strained eyes until they disappeared in the fog that turned the opposite shore into a dim gray line. Good-bye, brave, indomitable soul; and farewell!

CHAPTER XXVI

THE RETURN OF REASON

PROCEEDING into the city I breakfasted and upon again going into the street heard newsboys crying aloud about the escape of Morgan, and there was great excitement and commotion. How many were there in that more than one hundred thousand who rejoiced with me? Not many, surely. I rested quietly during the day and that evening took boat down the river, again a stranger among strangers.

Early the next morning, on awakening and looking out, I saw that we were tied up at Louisville, where we had been since midnight. On the wharf was the man Tapper who, more than a year before, had so artfully concealed his recognition of my name as that of a possible conspirator, and so dutifully and immediately reported me to his chief. I did not appear on deck until the boat was again in midstream.

At nine o'clock we were opposite Brandenburg but did not mean to stop. There were the heights from which our cannon had thundered so defiantly; over there was the Indiana shore on which we had

landed, and far beyond, past the now gray hills, the little valley to which my troubled thoughts had turned.

After a little while there came into view, slumbering on the margin of the river, the signal landing that Captain Bracken had been so anxious to reach in time for the packet. And far up was the break in the bluff where the horse-buyer had come to his end and I almost to mine, and where, down beneath the roots of the leafless trees, was the vast chamber with the reminding evidence of a lost race.

Presently came Leavenworth, and then the drive overland, bearing north of east, in a hired conveyance that jolted and shook, up hill and down, through the wet, clinging clay of the road. Over there was the entrance to the great cavern where I had parted from the wounded spy. And here, as the sun dropped low, was the road by the side of which I went to sleep in weariness, there was the very rock against which I leaned, and here was where Captain Sivad's men fought the Federals. Further along was the cross-roads where the neighborhood Unionists had rejoiced over my General's downfall and humiliated poor Bellray.

I could not tell why I had chosen the route by which I had returned, and which called forth so many disagreeable recollections. But it was ended at last and I was at home, stiff, sore and

mud-splashed, but rejoicing in the knowledge that one undertaking had prospered if many had failed. What mattered it now by what way I had come since it brought me to the dear, patient mother and to that other one waiting over there beyond?

The next morning I walked over to Bellray's. In the few weeks of my absence he had greatly changed for the worse. He was more distraught and moody, and his movements, once so active and determined, were now dull and heavy and his mental powers much diminished. The symptoms portended collapse and gave great anxiety to Kate and the few friends who were yet openly faithful. Dr. White urged that he be taken to a specialist for an operation, and named an eminent surgeon in New York, in which city he had received a part of his own education. This step had already been agreed upon before my arrival, and thither in December he was taken, accompanied by the doctor and Kate.

Word came to me in time, in a joyful note from the latter, that science had triumphed and that Roger's mind was restored. This letter was followed by another written a few days afterward, in which she said Roger had spoken to her of his purpose to return to Indiana as soon as he was strong enough to be released from the hospital, and hinted at vengeance against his enemies. She was alone with him in the great city, Dr.

White having returned home, and she was doing her best to dissuade him. She had confided to the surgeon something of his history and surroundings, and he had recommended a trip abroad in order that Roger might be removed from excitements until at least he was able to bear them. About the middle of March she wrote in great distress:

“Roger will leave the hospital in a week, and is determined to ‘go back and fight it out,’ he says. On this subject he becomes very violent, though as gentle as a child toward me always. The surgeon commands the trip, but Roger says that he does not need it, and that he has other things to do. Whatever these other things are, he must not do them. Oh, if you were only here! He would listen to you. Can’t you come and help me save him from the desperate undertakings on which I know he is resolved? He grows more and more furious every day, and vehemently denounces so many people. He does not seem like the same man that he used to be. If he goes back there will be a tragedy which will engulf him and add to the misery of us all. Can you come speedily?”

This appeal decided me. The terms of my parole bound me not to take up arms again until exchanged, and the suspension of the cartel left little hope of that. I regretted this less since the destruction of my General’s forces, but my indifference I now admitted to myself, was largely because of my mother’s open opposition, and Kate’s

unexpressed but well understood wishes. And then, being removed from the scene of the struggle, I saw the hopelessness of it, and knew that its continuance only meant a prolongation of misery and blood-letting and an increase of bitterness. The result was certain; the fabric of the Confederacy was raveling and fast becoming ragged. Its resources were not adequate to the demand for repairs. The North seemed as yet barely scathed, and had men and means and credit to meet any emergency that might arise.

All these things were clear to me at last. Only a little more hammering and a little closer drawing of the lines of blue and then the inevitable crash. If I were there it would only be one more beneath the wreck. It was long indeed before I could bring myself to these views and make up my mind that I was no longer to be a participant in the battles still being bravely waged by my people. Alas! What sacrifices they made and what sufferings they endured to continue the struggle for a separation that would have wrought, as I now believe, the ruin of our country.

The day after receiving Kate's last letter I started for New York. It would not do at all to allow Roger Bellray to return to Indiana if it could be prevented, and on my own part a sense of alienation that I could not overcome made me restless. Therefore I welcomed the opportunity as furnishing an excuse for my de-

parture. My mother, prudent woman that she was, had kept her matters so well in hand that there was no present difficulty about means. And so I had planned with her that if things went according to my mind she should join me later in New York, or wherever else I might determine to take up a temporary residence. To this arrangement she readily agreed when she clearly understood its purpose, and had considered that I would thereby be the sooner reconciled to my enforced retirement from the service.

I reached the metropolis the day before the time appointed for Roger to leave the hospital. Kate was living in the family of the surgeon who had undertaken her brother's cure. There I found her that evening, well, indeed, and more beautiful in my eyes than she had ever been—which is saying much—but torn by anxieties. I had not written of my coming, knowing that a letter would travel no faster than I, nor had I used the telegraph. So until she saw me she had no knowledge that I was on my way to join her. She rushed into my arms with a surprised cry, and between smiles and tears asserted that she had been on the verge of despair.

"If you had not come Roger would certainly have started home to-morrow," she said tremblingly, after awhile. "We must not let him go; he is now so extreme and bitter. He will gather his friends and will stop at nothing short of vio-

lence, for he considers that his last rights as a citizen have been taken away.”

I gave her such comforting words as came to me, but seriously doubted my ability to change her brother's resolution, and yet I must try. When I had left her and returned to my hotel I remained long awake thinking about the best way to reach him. No ordinary arguments or appeals would answer, for he was a very obdurate man and felt that he had been deeply wronged. At last I went to sleep believing that I had found a pleasant solution of the problem.

Early the next morning, in company with Kate, I went to see Roger. He was in his room at the hospital and had his belongings packed ready to leave. When we entered he was reading a newspaper but threw it aside and got up to receive us, expressing agreeable surprise at seeing me. He looked strong and his eyes were clear and keen as of old—keener, in truth, as though a fresh fire flamed in their depths. Almost at once he began to make eager inquiries as to the situation in Indiana. As I did not wish him to become aroused until I had spoken of the matter that was on my mind, I led him away from the scene of his grievances and back to ourselves.

“Mr. Bellray,” I began, “I want to say something about myself—ourselves; something I have come a thousand miles to say. A part of it you already know.”

"Kate has told me all about you, John. At any rate she has told me a good deal. You had a pretty tough time of it, didn't you?"

"Did she tell you all?" I asked, looking from him to Kate, who flushed at the emphasis I placed on the last word.

"Not—not everything, John," she said quietly, as she smoothed out her gloves on her knee.

"It is as I suspected—she has omitted the most important thing. She has promised to marry me. And look here; we intend to go abroad on our wedding journey and you are going with us."

Kate opened wide her eyes at the unfolding of a plan about which she had not been consulted. Though taken by surprise she was quick enough to see my purpose and to second it by a look of affectionate entreaty. Roger's face clouded and he was about to speak, but I went on:

"No use growling, Bellray; we've got it all arranged. If you go back to Indiana in your present frame of mind you will be killed. That probability will not keep you away, of course, but you will be likely to kill somebody else first, and you don't want to do that, I know. They are bitter about finding the arms in your house and only let you off because of your cracked head. Now that it's sound again some of them will try to give it another thump. It's no use; the game is not worth the playing. I will send for my mother and we will make a little family party and

see the world. This thing will soon be ended over here and we can come back and settle down. Now, honestly, isn't this the best thing to do? They will not let me fight any more and you—you—"

I stumbled here, not knowing how he would take from me what was on my tongue.

"Speak it out, John; and *I won't*; that's what you were about to say. No harm in the truth."

"Well, then, and you won't, so what is there for us to do? Certainly we ought not to go back there and amuse ourselves quarreling and fighting with our neighbors."

"The sum of it all is," he said with twinkling eyes that dulled the sting of his words, "you think I will be better off gallivanting about the world with a pair of young fools on a honeymoon. Well, I will think about it."

And then he began to talk of something else, and presently we all went down and Roger set about taking his leave of those in the institution whose friendship he had acquired during his stay. At last when we had entered the carriage that was waiting for us and were being whirled away he turned to his sister and said:

"Kate, it looks like running away, but I think we had better obey the Captain."

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